







# **NON-VIOLENT NON-CO-OPERATION**

**A CRITICAL SURVEY OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL  
MOVEMENT SINCE THE ADVENT OF  
MAHATMA GANDHI IN THE FIELD  
OF INDIAN POLITICS.**

**BY  
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**WITH A FOREWORD BY  
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# DEDICATED

To

The Congress Volunteers,

Men and Women,

Young and Old,

Who went to Prison,

Who faced the *Lathi* charges,

Whose business was ruined,

Whose property was forfeited,

And most of all

To those who lost their lives

In vindicating the honour of the Motherland.



## FOREWORD

**W**E are perhaps too near the time when the momentous events with which this book deals took place to be able to see them in their true perspective or to anticipate the verdict of history on the results of the last fifteen years' work of the Indian National Congress. There is, however, no room for doubt that the movement of non-violent non-co-operation, which Mahatma Gandhi inaugurated in 1920, constitutes a decisive landmark in the political history of India. That movement has been rightly described by its supporters as well as its opponents as a peaceful "revolt" against the bureaucracy in India; and the progress of this attempt to paralyse by non-violent methods one of the most powerful Governments in the world has been watched with keen interest not only in India but in all other countries. One may or may not agree with the actual details of the plan of the three campaigns of Non-co-operation or Civil Disobedience, which were launched by the Congress under the inspiration and guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, but it cannot be denied that to the apostle of the gospel of non-violence belongs the credit of giving a practical demonstration of the fact that it is possible to find an effective substitute for violence in national and for armed conflicts in international

affairs. Non-violent Non-co-operation, Mass Civil Disobedience and *Satyagraha* are no longer regarded as mere theories by thoughtful men and women, because it has been abundantly shown that they can be effectively employed for righting national wrongs.

Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar has, therefore, done well in writing a critical history of the various phases of the movement of Non-violent Non-Co-operation in India. Having been himself intimately and actively associated with the movement, he was eminently fitted for the task he set to himself. During the period about which he writes, he twice acted as President of the Congress and he has for several years been a member of the Congress Executive. He has also been twice interned and has been sent to gaol five times during the last fifteen years. He has thus acquired a first-hand knowledge of the inner working of the movement which few Congressmen can surpass. It is a matter of no small credit to Sardar Sardul Singh that in spite of this active and intimate association with the movement he has not written this book in a spirit of partisanship. Though he has been himself in the thick of the fight, he has tried to present a critical survey of the movement and to appraise the true significance of the various tendencies and policies which have supplied the motive force to the three campaigns of *Satyagraha*. He praises and blames with discrimination, and has approached his task not as a political agitator, but as

a contemporary historian. The book is written with sympathy and insight, and the author has frankly stated both the strong and the weak points of the theory and practice of *Satyagraha*.

The book is not encumbered with petty details, though it is well documented and contains a graphic history of the entire period. Of particular interest is the author's study of Mahatma Gandhi's character and the psychological analysis which he makes of the motives which inspired the supporters and the opponents of the Satyagraha movement. I am not expected to agree with all that the author has written in this book; but I have no hesitation in testifying to the restraint and moderation with which he has discussed some of the burning topics of the day, which occupied so large a space in the public mind during the last fifteen years and more. Taken as a whole, "Non-Violent Non-Co-operation" is a valuable addition to our political literature and I have much pleasure in commending it to the notice of all those who are interested in contemporary history,

*The Tribune Office,  
Lahore ;  
16-10-34.*

KALINATH RAY.



## PREFACE

**N**ON-VIOLENT Non-co-operation as introduced in Indian politics is Mahatma Gandhi's own conception. But when practised by Indian Nationalists it had to suffer much change from its contact with those who had not fully imbibed the principles underlying Mahatmaji's gospel. In this survey I have limited myself to the movement as it ran its course in India and the forces that lay behind it. I have dealt more with the practice than with the principles; but incidentally the principles have also been discussed to elucidate the main trend of the movement.

I have not discussed in this study the Bardoli peasants' *satyagraha*; I have also referred to the Akali *satyagraha* only by the way. The Bardoli peasants' *satyagraha* and the Akali *satyagraha*, though children of Gandhiji's movement, had an independence of their own. In Bardoli, the Bombay Government after belching fire and brimstone for about six months had finally to bow down before the poor but determined peasants and remit the enhanced tax; in the same way, the Punjab Government after stern repression of the Akalis for four years had to capitulate, give them the possession of their temples.



Both the movements completely succeeded in their objective, and were run purely on non-violent lines ; but as their objective was quite limited they could not strictly form part of the main political movement, the movement for the attainment of Swaraj, discussed here. Moreover to appreciate their significance it is necessary to enter into details which it is not possible in a volume of this type.

In the body of the book I have promiscuously used the terms 'British,' 'foreigner', 'bureaucracy', and Government. It is too late in the day to accuse the whole of the British nation, or the whole of the Indian Government or bureaucracy of reactionary tendencies in dealing with Indian questions. The Britishers as a nation take very little interest in Indian affairs and most of them feel in fact as little concerned with the political developments in this country as with the political affairs of Timbuctoo or Tientsin. Similarly there are members of the British Bureaucracy in India who are as favourably disposed to Indian aspirations as any nationalist could desire. Moreover, quite a large number of Indians now form part of the India Government. Many of them have always tried to do their duty to their country as best as it is possible for them to do in the circumstances. The main grievance of the Indian Nationalist is against those reactionary bureaucrats in India and that clique of British politicians in England who wield immense power in Indian affairs on account of the strong backing they receive

from representatives of the so-called vested interests. I am, therefore, anxious to make it quite clear that even my language when referring to these people is not always precise, I should not be understood to tar all Britishers or all members of the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy with the same brush. It was very difficult to draw such fine distinctions in the middle of the story told in this book or to use qualifying phrases each time these general terms were employed.

After this explanation, I am sure, all those Britishers and Indians, bureaucrats or otherwise, who help Indians in their march for freedom, would excuse the writer for using general terms, which in fact in no case apply to them.

Recently Mr. Lansbury, leader of the Labour Party in the British Parliament, sent Indians the following message :—

“ I need not repeat that British Labour is most unequivocally pledged to the grant of full responsible government to India. It must be clearly understood that we have never had a fair chance of carrying our pledges into practice. We have held offices on two occasions but as a minority government. The day is coming soon when the Labour will not only hold office but will also wield power. We shall utilize the first opportunity when it comes, in accordance with our repeated declarations when in opposition and in office, to offer to India the free choice either of remaining with us as an equal partner in the Commonwealth or of ending the connection if she so chooses. Personally I believe, I am speaking also for the Labour Party, I hope India will prefer the former course but the choice must be hers. For her own sake I feel

that she should avoid all the the horrors of an aggressive nationalism and the spirit of isolation and take part with us in the reconstruction of the world on the basis of international co-operation. But we have no desire to dictate to India as to what is best for her."

Yesterday Mr. Lansbury was a member of the British Cabinet, tomorrow again he may be at the head of the British Government. The Government in England changes from time to time. Mr. Lansbury has the same right to represent British opinion and even British Government as Mr. Baldwin or Sir Samuel Hoare. No one, therefore, has a right to condemn the Britishers or the British Government as such for the deplorable state of affairs in this country.

Claiming to be an humble Non-violent Non-co-operator, and having been interned twice and imprisoned five times—once for five years, once for two years, and thrice for short periods—I feel I have earned the right to criticise the movement wherever necessary. Non-violent Non-co-operation has come to stay, nay, its repercussions are bound to influence politics all over the world. Indian nationalists claim to replace "war and violence" with the weapons of Non-violent Non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience. They present these weapons for use to the whole of the warring world. From this point of view, the more we dwell on the defects of the movement, the better. It is only by discussing its defects and by trying to eliminate them that we can hope to perfect this wonderful instrument and win freedom for ourselves and peace and glory for mankind.

In some of the Chapters I have quoted Gandhiji's statements and speeches at full length. I need make no apology for that. Apart from the fact that these statements and speeches have an immortal value of their own as expressing the soul of a nation that is out to achieve freedom, the statements and speeches are self-explanatory. They narrate and sum up the story of the struggle as nothing else can.

The reader should also note that the volume before him is not a history but a survey. The events and policies have often been discussed out of their historical sequence, sometimes prospectively and sometimes retrospectively. This has been done in order to give the reader a unitary or solid view of the whole picture.

I should mention here my deep debt of gratitude to Professor Gurmukh Nihal Singh, M. Sc., Sardar Mangal Singh, M. A., and specially Pandit Pearey Mohan Dattatriya, B. A., LL. B., who went through the manuscript very carefully and made valuable suggestions for its improvement. My thanks are also due to Babu Kalinath Ray, the veteran Editor of *The Tribune*, for writing the "Foreword."

SARDUL SINGH,

*Lahore,*

CAVEESHAR.

*15th October, 1934.*



## CONTENTS

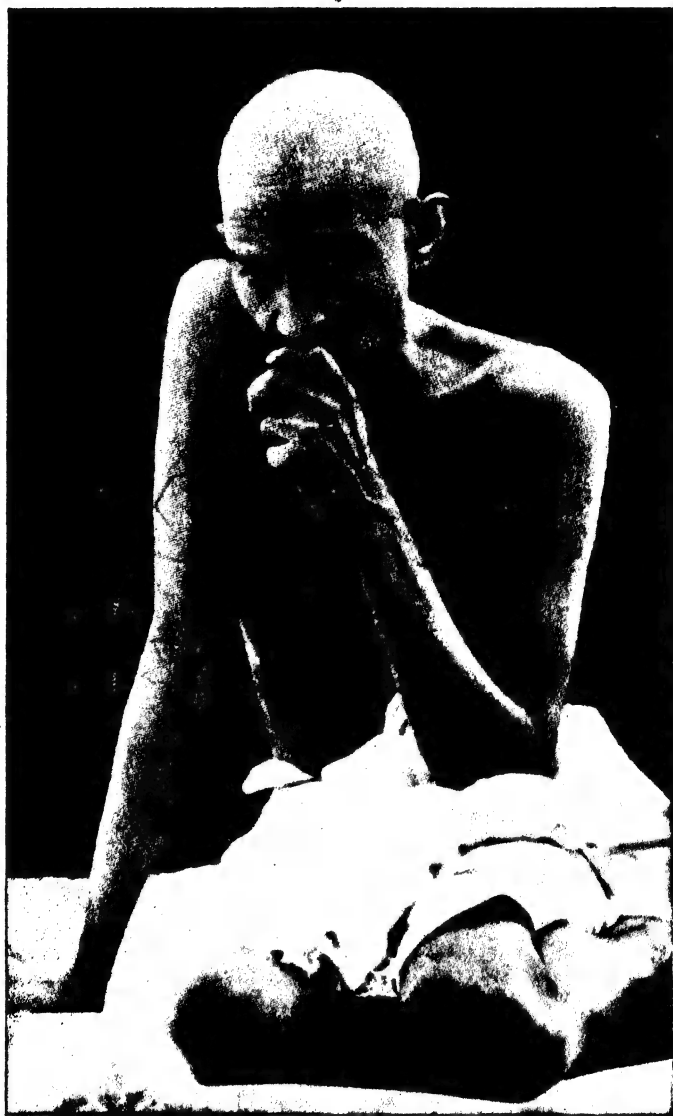
CHAPTER	PAGE
FOREWORD	I
PREFACE	V
I. Swaraj is my Birth Right	... 1
II. The Foreign Rule	... 5
III. Some Grievances	... 14
IV. Defence of the Foreign Rule	... 27
V. Different Means and Different Parties	35
VI. The Birth of Non-Co-operation	... 48
VII. The Boycotts	... 92
VIII. Social Uplift and Political Power	... 105
IX. The First Campaign	... 85
X. Negotiations and Debacle	... 95
XI. Mahatmaji's Optimism	... 105
XII. Some Lessons	... 124
XIII. New Orientation	... 130
XIV. The Swarajists	... 139
XV. Parallel Government	... 158
XVI. Complete Independence	... 159
XVII. Within or Without the British Empire	168
XVIII. The Salt Satyagraha	... 189
XIX. The Second Campaign	... 207
XX. The Round Table Conference	... 218
XXI. The Second Conference	... 233
XXII. The Indian Princes	... 253
XXIII. The War Clouds	... 259

XXIV.	The Resumption of Hostilities	...	277
XXV.	The Third Campaign	...	294
XXVI.	The Communal Award	...	303
XXVII.	The Third Conference	...	312
XXVIII.	The New Reforms	...	316
XXIX.	Suspension of Civil Resistance	...	332
XXX.	The Future Struggle	...	341
XXXI.	The Fundamentals	...	350
XXXII.	Hindu-Moslem Relations		358
XXXIII.	New Parties		370
XXXIV.	To The British		381

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MAHATMA GANDHI

# NON-VIOLENT NON-CO-OPERATION

## CHAPTER I

### "SWARAJ IS MY BIRTH RIGHT"

**I**T was Tilak, the father of Indian Nationalism, who once said : " Swaraj is my birth right, and I shall have it." Since then the words have become the watchword of every Indian patriot.

Self-Government or Swaraj means to a nation what personal liberty means to an individual. As a person who has lost his liberty cannot feel satisfied unless he gets it back, a nation cannot have any rest unless it attains Self-Government. It is well-known that a slave would adopt all means to become free even of the most generous bonds that restrict his liberty ; similarly a nation is always at war with restraints that are put against its freedom. And it is not only with individuals and nations that the love of liberty is so great ; it is nature's own law ingrained in the very heart of the universe ; birds and animals love freedom, and still more the creepers and plants whose tiny shoots spring forth from under the soil that tries to suppress them down.

Mankind has come to regard political freedom as the birth right of every nation, why should not Indians then aspire to it? They claim the right to Swaraj as strongly as any other nation, great or small. If the Poles, the Koreans, and the Afghans could aspire for freedom, why should not the Indians who are the inheritors of a great name and a great civilization ?

The last European War opened the eyes of the whole world and proved to the hilt how necessary it was for every nation to be free from all outside interference. During and after the Great War the gospel of self-determination came to be preached as the rule of life for all nations, and the desire to win freedom therefore began to well up in the Indian hearts also.

Indians are a proud nation ; they boast of a civilization as old and as advanced as that of any other nation in the world ; when they find themselves restrained from making their full contribution to the progress of the world, they feel a sort of violent reaction against un-natural barriers ; there is a revulsion of feeling against those who want to keep them down and refuse them opportunities of self-realization and self-expression.

The idea of one nation being governed by another is too antiquated for the twentieth century. It is a remnant of the barbarous age when robber chieftains, with the help of the unscrupulous mercenary bands, glorified themselves into kings and emperors. The very idea that one nation should

be governed by another is hateful. The very presence of a foreigner in India, not as a friend or as a fellow subject, but belonging to a ruling class, proclaims her shame ; the very idea of dependence and subordination is a disgrace.

Such ideas were at the bottom of the great post-War upheaval in India to which some looked with hope and the others with dismay. One could call the movement sentimental or visionary, but no one could deny its existence or influence. Any attempt to explain it away would have met the same fate as the endeavour to silence an active volcano roaring with fury and fire by shutting one's eyes and closing one's ears to it.

It was no argument to say that the foreign system of Government in India was for the good of the country and must continue as long as it was believed to be so. Good or bad, Indians did not want it ; they wanted to be masters in their own household ; the very idea of external tutelage stunk in their nostrils. Where was the justification for you to deprive a man of his hearth and home, argued the Indian nationalist, even when you believed he was not so well-endowed with natural gifts as you thought you yourself were ? Such a theory of trusteeship was exploded long ago and the Indian nationalist had no patience to listen to it.

The Indian nationalist also thought that it was not only India that was being injured for want

of opportunity for self-expression ; with the weakness of India, the whole world had also to suffer. When a part of the body is diseased, the whole body deteriorates with it. Europe and America could not realize the loss which they had to bear because of the backwardness of the Orient, as the injury thus inflicted was not on the surface and could not directly be seen ; but a little thought could easily show that the strength of the Asiatic countries would have greatly added to the strength of the whole world, and Europe and America would have advanced in the march of civilization more rapidly than was actually the case.

Indians thought so, and grumbled.

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## CHAPTER II

### THE FOREIGN RULE

**W**AS the foreign rule in India really benevolent ? Was the forced trusteeship really in the best interests of the Indian people ? The Indian nationalist replied : "NO."

Before the advent of the foreigners, India was regarded as one of the richest countries in the world ; in fact it was her wealth that wrought her ruin by attracting foreign adventurers to her soil. And how had India fared under foreign domination ? India was among the poorest and most backward countries of the world. No decade passed without devastating attacks of famine and plague. In health, wealth, and education—the three important criteria of prosperity—India was almost at the lowest rung of the ladder. Why ? The Indians replied : Because of the foreign rule. Prof. Seeley's dictum that subjection for a long time to a foreign yoke is one of the most potent causes of national deterioration, was proved here beyond cavil.

Two hundred years back industries in India flourished so well as in no other country. Her silk and cotton goods were in demand throughout the whole of the civilized world. Sugar, spices, iron, brass, diamonds, and many other articles of

daily use were exported to other countries in large quantities. All this resulted in making Indians prosperous and self-satisfied.

In health and education Indians were far in advance of other nations. There was no village which had not its temple or mosque, and there was no temple or mosque which did not serve as a school for education and as a hospital for relief. In big towns the number of colleges and hospitals was often more than the ordinary needs required.

Foreign merchants backed by their Governments launched a crusade to destroy the Indian industries, and greatly succeeded in their object. The way in which Indian cotton industry was destroyed and the same built up in England forms one of the blackest chapters in the imperial history of the world. But that was not the only instance of an attack against Indians industries; one can find this subject well illustrated throughout the whole of the trade laws and the commercial policy of European countries, especially of England, during the last century. The main principle that underlay the European commercial policy during the nineteenth century was to grow rich at the expense of the Asiatic countries in general and that of India in particular.

By the hostile attitude of powerful interests not only old Indian industries were killed, new industries were also not given any help to grow. No efforts were made to introduce modern industrial methods to make India fit for competing with other nations.

In the progress of the world no nation can stand still; it must either go forward or go backward. The result of foreign exploitation was the growing misery and helplessness of the Indian people. A self-governing India would have devoted as much attention to its industrial development as any other advanced country. India was rich in natural resources ; her mines, her rivers, her soil, her forests, could produce almost anything which she required. But these lay mostly neglected.

Indian mines could supply India more coal and iron than she required for her own needs ; but she had to import these articles of daily use from other countries. Indian fields could produce enough cane to meet all Indian needs for sugar ; but she had to send out crores of rupees every year to buy this commodity. Indian forests could supply pulp for manufacturing paper for the immediate requirements of almost the whole of the world, but India had to buy paper from foreign countries even for her own use. Indian rivers had waters enough for the irrigation of the whole of the cultivable land in India, but more than four-fifth of the Indian lands had to depend on uncertain rains. There was sufficient water-power in India to create energy for all her industries, but the entire source lay for a century almost untapped. India produced cotton far more than she needed for her own use, but she had to import every year cloth worth about sixty crores of rupees from other countries.



Was it then strange, asked the Indian nationalist, if India was poor and backward? While the other countries went forward by leaps and bounds, India was allowed only to mark time or go back. A cursory glance at the long correspondence on commercial and financial questions between the Indian Government and the Government in England would convince every one as to how unjustly the unfortunate dependency was treated in this respect.

Dadabhoy Noaraji, Ranade, and other Indian publicists put again and again before the public what India had to pay for foreign services, civil and military. A sum as large as one half of the Indian revenues went directly to the pockets of those who were engaged in governing the country. If Indians groaned under such burdens and wanted to get rid of them, was it surprising? George Lansbury's, as of every honest British statesman's, reply to the question was :—

“We must bear in mind the fact that every penny of wealth drawn from India to pay salaries, pensions and allowances to the multitude of British officials, soldiers, Civil Servants, Viceroys, Governors of provinces, etc. etc. comes from a nation of 300,000,000 people, most of whom live at a standard of life which reduces vitality almost to vanishing point.

“Also, let us never forget that in making great reservoirs, building railway tracks and creating the New Delhi, the British take a very considerable toll from India in the shape of interest on loans and dividends from companies.

“This tribute is almost entirely spent outside India.

I have tried to get figures to show what this total drain is, but no actual figures are as yet available. But that a nation so rich and bountiful in the possession of natural resources should be so poverty-stricken, is a fact that should make every Englishman have the deepest suspicions.

"Roman conquerors settled in the territories. They treated backward nations like ourselves harshly, and often inflicted forced labour. But in those days the wealth wrung from the natives was largely spent in the country.

"Irish landlordism was one degree worse, because rents were spent abroad, by landlords who never saw their estates. British and French loans to Ismail Pasha, the sometime Khedive of Egypt, were spent likewise in the haunts of gambling and vice outside the country.

"Britain, as an imperial power, draws huge sums from India, and this is spent just as absentee landlords would spend it—away from where it is earned. Much of the wealth of all of us comes to us in this way and is, strictly, parasitical.

"We shall have to be prepared to give this up and leave the Indians to provide their own Civil Service, Army and other services.

"Whatever certain sections of the Press may say, we do not in fact make India rich and contented. Our rule leaves her desperately poor. Think of the condition of people, most of whom are illiterate, and masses of whom live, as I say, under conditions of semi-starvation.

"None of our fathers who conquered India went there to make her prosperous. They went for purposes of robbery with violence, or—with the more civilized—as traders out to make huge profit. Clive and Warren Hastings, and all the long list of Viceroys, have been expected to foster British prosperity.

"From time to time they would stop to assure the Indians that the interests of both nations are identical—just as other people repeat the equally foolish phrase about the interests of capital and labour being the same. Of course, intelligent people who are intellectually honest know this is quite untrue."

Apart from the commercial and industrial exploitation of the country and the general financial drain due to foreign services India had also to suffer intellectual drain of the type not known anywhere else in the world. The higher services were mostly manned by foreigners. After amassing money and gathering experience for about thirty years these men went back to their own country. Had they, after earning pensions, remained in India, their money and brains would have done a lot of good to this country ; but all this went to waste as far as India was concerned. Not only India was not allowed to produce her own statesmen, those who could become such left her just when their services could prove most useful. About three hundred men retired every year from higher Indian services. India had spent on them her best resources and afforded them the best of opportunities to get experience and become useful. But they left her after growing ripe in experience like so many faithless lovers. Think of India losing three hundred men every year out of her best product, and you would realise that the intellectual drain due to the foreign rule was as great as the financial.

It was one of the tragedies of the foreign rule that so much of energy was wasted in maintaining and opposing it. Gokhale, Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Das, Mohammad Ali, Nehru, would have done wonders in a free country. Curzon, Minto, Hardinge, Reading would have achieved similar results as

administrators in a free India. But the efforts of both the sets of statesmen were mainly directed to destroy the work of each other.

And what about the foreign army in India ? It costs the country nearly half of her central revenues. Much of this money could have easily been saved for education and industrial expansion. The Indian Government could not spend sufficient funds on these two heads because it had no money to spare ; all its resources were exhausted to meet the heavy expenditure on the Army.

Indians could not but remain poor as long as education and industries were not liberally financed. Indian ignorance was the cause of Indian poverty, and Indian poverty became the cause of Indian ignorance. The Government dared not tax the people any more even for education. Thus Indians moved in a vicious circle. A purely Indian Army, as efficient and as strong as the foreign army, could have been easily maintained on less than half of what was spent on it. Instead of spending about sixty crores every year on the Army and roads and railways of military importance, India could have defended her frontiers with about twenty crores. Our next door neighbours, the Afghans, spent only about half a crore on their army. If nothing else, argued the Indian nationalist, the military expenditure alone was sufficient to call for a radical change in the system of government in this country.

The net result of foreign exploitation, of apathy towards industrial development, of neglect of education, of military burden, of foreign services, of intellectual and financial drain, was that India suffered from chronic and grinding poverty. No decade passed without one or two severe famines when you could buy a human being for ten or twenty rupees. Time after time the calamity came, people died of starvation and plague, but Government was incompetent to check the evil.

It was not that India did not produce sufficient food for her population; she suffered because the people in general had not sufficient money to buy the necessities of life. About seventy-five per cent of the people were engaged in agriculture, but they could scarcely earn a bare living; and when famine came, they had nothing in store to meet the calamity. Their incomes were very small, and what little they could save for hard times was taken away from them in the shape of taxes. In the influenza epidemic of 1919, six million Indians died in a few weeks; the toll that was levied by the bubonic plague amounted to ten millions.

Indians did not receive sufficient education, nor had they money enough to make use of the new agricultural and industrial methods for increasing their income; nor were there to be found openings in the shape of new industries for the ever growing population. Agricultural industry was over congested;

there was no education nor capital to improve it ; and there was no other source of income. Naturally the country went down to the lowest level of existence. Was it strange then that the people wanted a change ? At the root of all the misery and weakness, thought the Indian, was the foreign system of Government, a system foreign in personnel, foreign in sympathies, and foreign in spirit.

Indians wanted Swaraj no doubt for its own sake, but the national sentiment was not without good grounds to support it. "India", according to H. G. Wells, "was an autocracy without an autocrat. Its rule combined the disadvantage of absolute monarchy with the impersonality and irresponsibility of democratic officialdom." Government, indigenous or foreign, democratic or autocratic, is always an evil and a curse ; but when it combines in itself the disadvantages of all the systems without any of their advantages, it becomes a hell. Such a system could not go on for ever.

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## CHAPTER III

### SOME GRIEVANCES

**A** PART from the general defects inherent in a foreign Government, there was another set of causes which were not less important in their bearing on the Indian struggle for freedom.

Foreign rule meant the use of foreign mentality in solving the problems that came up before the Government ; and foreign mentality meant want of sympathy. The rulers looked at a problem from one point of view and the people from another. Tilak was a criminal in official circles and a hero in the public eye ; Gokhale was worshipped by Indians as if he were a god, but Government could make no better use of him than of threatening him with the terrors of a prison cell. If there was any name that was thoroughly hated in India it was that of General Dyer ; but amongst the Anglo-Indian gods the General occupied one of the highest altars; no other official was ever presented by the ruling class with a purse subscribed to so widely and so successfully.

When there was a fundamental difference of opinion about men and matters, it was not strange that mis-understandings arose making a bad system still worse. There was no province, no district, no town, and no community that had not special grievances of its own ; and most of

these grievances were born of want of sympathy and understanding on both sides. Officials did not understand the people, the people understood not the officials, and both thought they were in the right ; both thus helped in the enactment of a drama that was more tragic than any tragedy of errors. The story of some of the acute grievances which agitated India so much just before the non-co-operation struggle was started well illustrates the point.

If there was any question that was more dear to the heart of an Indian Moslem than any other, it was the fate of the Khilafat. With this question, in his opinion, was connected the sanctity and the glory of his religion. Many of the Moslems believed that their religion was mainly protected by the strong arm of the Khalifa. One who attacked his prestige and power attacked Islam in its most vital part. Christianity had swallowed so many other religious communities of the world ; but it was not able to produce any marked effect on Islam because the Christian Europe was not able to destroy the Ottoman Empire, the Empire of the Khalifa. It was the Khalifa, the political descendant of Mohamet and Omar, who was regarded as the warden of Moslem holy places; and as long as his power was safe, Islam was safe. Christian Europe knew this, and for that reason for the last three hundred years it did its best to shake off the foundations of its religious rival. If the Khilafat remained intact for so long a time, it was as much due to the fighting resources of the



Turk as to the inordinate greed of the European powers who could not agree amongst themselves as to the share which each of them wanted of the spoils.

During the Great War, Turks fought on the side of the Germans and were the first to be defeated by the Allied Powers. In their defeat Europe got another chance to destroy the Turkish influence in Europe, and weaken the power of the Khalifa in Asia. Thrace, Syria, Palestine, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Egypt—all were snatched from the Turks who were left to sulk peevishly in Anatolia. Before the Khalifa was finally dethroned by his own people, he lived in Constantinople only as a toy in the hands of the Allies.

In defeating the Turks no mean part was played by the Indian forces ; and not a small portion of these consisted of Indian Moslems. In defeating the Turks Indian money was lavishly spent, and Indian Moslems subscribed to the various War Funds as liberally as members of any other community. They did so because they were given to understand that it was their duty as British subjects to help the British Empire in its trouble. At the same time the Moslems were given to believe that when they fought the Turks they had simply to punish them a little for taking the wrong side and that it was in no way desired to inflict such injury on them as to lower the prestige of the Khilafat. They were given definite promises that in the final

settlement Indian feelings as regards Turkey would be given full consideration. Indian Moslems treated these promises as a sacred word from the British for the protection of their religion.

In the treaty of Sevres these promises were thrown to the winds. It was arranged to so destroy the Turkish Empire as to leave it only a despicable relic of its past glory. Indian Moslems could not tolerate it. The pro-Greek policy of the English, even when France and Italy were prepared to favourably consider the Turkish view-point, exasperated the Indian Muslims. They wanted Turks to be treated as leniently as possible, but the Lloyd George Ministry wanted to put quite an end to their power. Every effort was made by Indians to secure justice for the Turks but the English Government strictly kept to the policy of favouring Greece at the expense of Turkey. The same policy was followed in other parts of the Turkish Empire. The result was that public opinion in India favoured one side and the English Government the other. The ruling race did not understand nor did it care to understand the view-point of the ruled. The ruled could not understand the view-point of the rulers. The want of understanding on both sides led to a revolt of the Indian Moslems and the struggle did not end till the Turks themselves ended the question of the Khilafat by throwing the Khalifa overboard.

Similar was the question of the Punjab Martial  
N.N.-2.



whipped without their being even suspected of having done any wrong, their only fault being that they were stronger than the other boys in the school and could, according to the British official concerned, bear beating more easily ! At Lahore young men were humiliated by being obliged to salute the European officials. A marriage party which had committed absolutely no offence was publicly flogged. At Amritsar hundreds of people were brutally murdered when they had gathered to pass a resolution expressing loyalty of the town to the Government ; and when the victims lay dead and wounded, no food, water, medicine or any other help was allowed to be given to them. Not only was Indian life recklessly destroyed, people were also humiliated in ways wicked and cruel. At the point of bayonet, Indians were made to crawl on their bellies at the feet of the British soldiers ; they were publicly flogged for disobeying such savage orders. Indian women and children were most shamelessly insulted ; veils were torn from the faces of Purdah women ; they were spat upon, and called "flies and bitches." All this was done by responsible Englishmen, and under the very nose of the higher officials.

The reign of terror lasted in the Punjab for about two months. General Dyer's delirious behaviour and mad orations of Sir Michael O'Dwyer added insult to injury and agitated the Indian mind as never before. The British Government was forced to appoint under Lord Hunter an Enquiry

Committee to report on the Martial Law administration. Still the victims of lawlessness who were mostly in jails were not allowed to take part in the proceedings of the Committee.

The findings of the Hunter Committee were based only on one-sided evidence, the evidence mostly of the guilty officials themselves. Even according to these findings the officials had far exceeded the limits of humanity. But the Government of India could not move in the right direction; after awarding nominal punishment to one or two persons, it closed the whole case by justifying the actions of the chief culprits. The Lieutenant Governor, his advisers and many others equally guilty with the smaller fry for many of the enormities committed during the Martial Law, went off scot free. General Dyer, the hero of Jallianwala Bagh, was found to be guilty of only of an "error of judgment". Many of the culprits were recommended for good services and got promotion. It was not unnatural then that Frank Johnson under whose orders innocent school children were whipped at Lahore could later on boast in England amidst the plaudits of English ladies and gentlemen, "Given a chance, I will do the same again."

Those whom the people wanted to be impeached and put on the gallows, were proclaimed as heroes; those whom the people regarded as innocent were thrown into jails. This could be possible only under a Government which was not responsible

to the people. People demanded the punishment of the officials responsible for the reign of terror, but the Government could not listen to such a cry. There was thus a deadlock on this question just as in so many others.

The handling of the Akali question was not less unfortunate. The Sikhs wanted to take the management of their Gurdwaras or temples in their own hands ; but the officials and red-tapism stood in the way. The Gurdwaras were managed by the priests who originally acted as agents of the Sikh community. Being in irresponsible possession of the management for a long time, many of these priests had degenerated into monsters of iniquity. Their private and public lives had become as great scandals as those of the inmates of monasteries in Europe in the dark ages. No evil was too gross for them, no sin too heinous. One of them actually planned and brought about the murder of more than one hundred reformers in cold blood. The victims at Nankana, the birth place of Guru Nanak, did not even resist the attack of the gang hired by the chief priest ; but the wretch would have no rest until he saw them hewed into pieces and burnt alive.

It was monsters like the priests of Nankana that the Sikhs wanted to oust from the temples. But the Government would not allow them to do so. They must go to the courts and pray there for removal of these persons. Being in possession

of the Gurdwara property the priests were rich men and had great influence with the officials. Thus fortified, the priests could defy the public. Procedure in the courts was lengthy and complicated ; it favoured those who were in actual possession, be they the mere servants or agents of the real owners.

In the past the Sikhs had power to remove any priest whom they found acting dishonestly. Even during the Sikh rule, the Government did not interfere with the rights of the Sikh community in this respect. But under the British this was made impossible ; moral pressure was not allowed full play, and the authority of the courts and of the executive was often exercised in support of the Mahants or priests in their positions of vantage. Government and the priests pulled on one side and the people on the other. This resulted in incidents like those of Guru-ka-Bagh and Bhai Pheru. At both these places the Sikhs demonstrated their readiness to make every sacrifice to assert their right to have control over the Gurdwaras ; on the other side some of the local officials used every measure—mean base, and brutal, as a Christian gentleman like Mr. Andrews described the Guru-ka-Bagh beating—to defeat the Sikhs and help the priests. Hundreds of the non-violent Sikhs were beaten and severely wounded who wanted to go to the Guru-ka-Bagh where the defiant Mahant stood hedged in by the support he received from the

officials. Thousands of Akalis were thrown in jails.

Later on the Government had to yield. But this happened only after one of the most loyal communities in India had become the hot-bed of revolutionaries. The Akali agitation made it clear once more that such conflicts between the people and officials were natural under a government that was irresponsible and foreign ; under people's government such affairs could have been settled long before they reached a critical stage.

The treatment of Indians in other parts of the Empire also showed the same deplorable spirit at work. In South Africa, Canada, Australia, Kenya—almost everywhere in the British Empire,—an Indian was regarded as a *pariah*. Germans, Russians, Austrians, and all those who had fought against the English in the Great War had every right to go to these colonies and earn their livelihood, but the Indians who had more than once shed their best blood for the British Empire could claim no respectable place there. Why ? Because they were not governed by their own countrymen who could fight their cause fearlessly and whole heartedly against the colonies.

We have seen above how the foreign rule on account of the difference of point of view between the rulers and the ruled became so naturally the cause of so many troubles and misunderstandings. In almost all the important questions the rulers found themselves in one camp and the ruled in another.



The Nationalists also thought that the foreign rule must go, if for no other reason at least to eliminate the crop of hatred that had sprung up on both the sides. The irresponsible system had degraded the character of the rulers and the ruled alike. An Englishman in his home in England is as loveable a person as one could desire ; but in India in his relations with the Indians he had become so exclusive, vain and blind that it was a surprise in social science how the same man could conduct himself so differently in two places.

A new guest from England once found Lady Dufferin in her bath room attended to by an Indian water-carrier. The guest was surprised to see her ladyship bathing in the presence of a member of the other sex, and asked : "Bathing in his presence ?" Her ladyship smilingly replied : "But he is an Indian." This story sheds a flood of light on the mentality of the ruling class when dealing with the natives ; they were not regarded as human beings, they were looked down upon as something below the human level.

This phase of the question is not very pleasant to discuss. Those who wish to be convinced how the irresponsible system of Government played havoc with the noble hearts of the British people, should read the reports of the cases of assaults on Indians by Europeans and the decisions of the foreign juries in such cases.

On the other side Indian character also had gone down very low. Indians as a nation were never before so mean, cowardly and cringing. Under the foreign rule they lost all self-respect. Manly virtues were never before at so low an ebb as before the advent of the non-co-operation movement. If for no other reason foreign domination should go because of the emasculating influence it had on the people. It was not untrue that the loss of power had resulted in the loss of manhood and character, and nothing was more dangerous for the progress of mankind than the degradation of one-fifth of the human race in this way. Free India would have helped in the uplift of mankind ; but under the conditions it was placed in it was a burden and a drag on the shoulders of civilisation—a plague-spot not only physically but also morally. Free India would have meant prosperous India ; prosperous India would have meant an increase in the purchasing power of Indians and also the ennobling of their character ; the increase in their purchasing power and the improvement in their character would have directly reacted on the prosperity and uplift of the whole world. Not only India would have gained by her freedom, the whole world would have been benefitted thereby, and more so England with whom she had such close trade and other relations.

Indians argued that they wanted freedom not only for their own benefit but also for the benefit of the whole mankind ; their freedom would have

greatly helped in the moral and material prosperity of the whole world.

There were times when British character was the envy of the whole world ; there was a time when England was regarded as the foremost country among the prosperous countries of the world. But those days were gone ; British character and British prosperity were long surpassed by more fortunate nations. Indians believed that this was due to the degrading influence which the occupation of India had produced on the heart, soul and mind of their rulers. Indian freedom would certainly have helped in raising the British from the mire to which they had been dragged by their baneful heritage in the East.

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## CHAPTER IV

### DEFENCE OF THE FOREIGN RULE

**E**XCEPT its bayonets the foreign rule in India had little to defend it. The Nationalist declared that on all grounds—social, moral, economic—it must go, and, that the sooner it went the better.

But there were people who advanced some political grounds to defend it. They asserted that the Indians were not sufficiently educated to understand the art of government ; that they were not capable of uniting amongst themselves and that as soon as the hand of the foreigner was withdrawn the different communities would fall at each other's throat and make a hell of the country with communal and religious wrangles ; that Indians were weak and had no strong army of their own to defend the frontiers ; and that as soon as the English sailed away from Bombay there would set in indescribable confusion and anarchy in the country. If the foreigner was here he was here in duty bound to save India from such horrors ; otherwise why should he come to this country to toil and moil in an uncongenial climate and so far from his home ? These arguments, in short, led one to the gospel of the white man's burden in the East. The white man was there as a missionary and a philanthropist ; he made tremendous

sacrifices for the benefit of the benighted humanity. The masses loved him and appreciated his work ; it was only a few ungrateful persons, educated on Western lines, who, due to blind selfishness, wanted the foreign rule to go ; otherwise the whole country was with the foreigner and felt grateful for the peace and prosperity secured by the British Raj.

The argument was transparently fallacious. The surprise was that there were so many amongst the ruling class who honestly believed in its validity. It was not their fault. It is in human nature to often regard one's own defects as virtues. It is said in India that at night peevit lies in its nest on its back with both the legs raised towards the starry heavens innocently believing that its tiny legs support the weight of the sky and protect the earth from being crushed under it. But for the tragic results, Indians would have felt amused at the faith of those who thought that the hands and feet of the white man in India were stretched so long and wide to protect the country under his sway. Such a delusion was indeed pitiable.

"Education in India was not as well advanced as in other civilised countries." But it was wrong to say that fitness for Swaraj necessarily demanded a higher standard of education than was allowed to prevail in India. Many of the European countries got self-government long before they were as well educated as Indians

were before they demanded national independence. Not to go far from India, the Afghans were a good example to show that freedom could be won and maintained without education. Education was, argued the nationalist, a great necessity; and one of the reasons that Indians wanted freedom was that they were anxious to accelerate the pace of education in the country; but literary education as such was never before regarded as a criterion for the freedom of a country.

It is undoubtedly true that the native Army in India was not as strong as it otherwise would have been. But during the Great War it was proved beyond doubt that, given a will to do, India could raise five times the strength of its ordinary army in one year. Under their own rule, Indians believed, they could have done twenty times better than was possible for them to do under the restricted circumstances. The only difficulty would have been felt about amunitions and generalship. But these were not insurmountable difficulties; the experience of the Great War conclusively showed that in these respects too India had almost illimitable resources.

Indians did not require a very strong army for their defence; they could meet any likely attack from any side even with the equipment they already possessed; and for any emergency that could have arisen they had plenty of resources. It was only the interested expert who so exaggerated Indian

weakness on this score. But such an opinion was biased and not worth serious consideration.

"Indians were not as well-united amongst themselves as people in many other countries." It is in the nature of the foreign rule, argued the nationalist, to keep the people divided amongst themselves; and that was what had happened in India. Hindus and Mohammadans lived before amicably in Indian States; the Hindu-Mohammadan question troubled nobody there. But in British India Hindus and Mohamadans were not prepared to compose their differences because they knew there was a third party to show favour now to the one and then to the other. The Indian national movement was the cause of much improvement in this direction, but the real remedy lay in the attainment of Swaraj. It was only then that both the communities could realise their responsibilities and show willingness to meet each other half-way. Indian differences, argued the nationalist, should in no way stand between them and Swaraj; rather Swaraj was the only way to get out of the unhappy tangle.

The Indians did not believe in the theory that the British were in India amongst jarring creeds and quarrelling races at a great sacrifice; they regarded the theory as a clever humbug. Were South Americans, Afghans or Chinese more peaceful, asked the Indian nationalist, than his own countrymen? If not, why then the British did not extend their

humanitarian efforts to those quarters also ? Simply because in India people could not effectively check encroachments on their liberties, while in South America, China, and Afghanistan the mailed fist of the United States, Japan, and Russia respectively would not allow any impudent humbug on the part of British Imperialism to be tolerated for a moment.

It was often stated that those who opposed the present system of Government in India took no notice of what was done by the British as regards Railways, Canals, Posts and Telegraphs, Roads and Public Buildings, and other similar improvements. The Indian replied : True, before the advent of the British, India had not these things; but when one compared what the British could do in this respect with what had been done during the last hundred years in other countries, all the so-called blessings of the British Raj paled into insignificance. The achievements of the British looked large only when people concentrated their attention on what was done in India and shut their eyes to what was done outside her boundaries in the same period in other countries. Sixty years back Japan was thought to be scarcely out of the barbaric stage ; compared to India it stood nowhere ; to-day it stands in the forefront of the most progressive nations of the world. Those who made so much of a progressive item here and a progressive item there, did not take



into consideration what was left undone ; they did not consider what other countries had done, and what India would have done had she been free to work out her own destiny.

This is what Sir Alfred Watson, Editor of the *Statesman*, addressing a meeting of the Royal Empire Society, had to say on this aspect of the question :

"Industrially India is a land of missed opportunities and the main blame for that rests heavily upon us British. I know it is the fashion to be lyrical about the achievements of Britishers in India. To nobody do I yield in recognition of what has been accomplished, but I measure the achievement against the possibilities and the gap is appalling. For something like 200 years we have been in India and for the greater part of that time we have been supreme in India. Yet India is to-day one of the backward nations of the world economically, and very backward in industry.

"All the conditions for a great industrial country India possesses in abundance. Raw materials of every kind are to be found in and under her soil. She has an immense population skilled in fine craftsmanship and capable of turning from the home industries in which they have learned their art to the control and direction of machines. Buried away India has had capital in abundance for every development, could that capital have been persuaded from its hiding places. The Indian labourer subsists on little—on far too little for the welfare of the country. Putting these things together—cheap and abundant labour, large supplies of raw material, considerable sources of power from coal and from the streams of the country, a population that offers a great market at the very doors, fair facilities for transport and the possibility of obtaining capital, and you have conditions that may well make the mouth of the industrial organiser water."

Those loud in praising the foreign bureaucracy laid also great stress on its administrative efficiency. If efficiency meant red-tapism, replied the Indian nationalist, the Indian Government was decidedly one of the most efficient in the world. But if by efficiency was meant that the departments worked smoothly, usefully, economically and in an energetic manner, the present system was far from being a model. It is well-known how expensive were the foreign officials ; it was a curse that India had to pay so heavily for the Services and that too notwithstanding her acknowledged poverty. If a private firm were to run its business on methods adopted by Indian bureaucrats, it would have gone bankrupt in one year ; but here the officials had always at their disposal the Indian revenues to fall back upon for the expensive administrative machinery.

Police and Justice were two important departments which came directly in touch with the people ; it was here that the masses came into direct contact with the administration and could weigh the machinery as to its good or bad working. The Indian Police was regarded as the most corrupt and stupid even in the East ; and the process of administration of Justice was as slow and expensive as any white elephant in the world. It was proverbial in India that it was better to be robbed than to go to the Police Station to report a crime, and it was better to burn your title deeds than to go to a civil court to claim what was due to you. Medical, Revenue,

Public Works, Railway and other departments equally shared this notoriety in corruption and inefficiency. It was not only the low-paid subordinate who was responsible for this state of affairs, high officials stood equally to blame. Some of them were suspected to be directly connected with objectionable practices ; though most of them were guilty only of neglect and natural ignorance.

It was also said in support of the foreign bureaucracy that under its rule India became quite safe from attacks on its north-west frontier. According to the Indian nationalist, those who argued thus forgot that long before the foreigners occupied India, attacks on the north-west frontier had completely ceased; Indian frontiers were no less safe when the Sikhs ruled in the Punjab than was the case under the British.

It was said that the British gave India internal peace. But the so-called peace was secured at the expense of Indian liberty. If people were silent that was because of the iron fist. Ordinary laws had often to be misapplied to gag the people ; when these failed new measures were forged ; and when these too failed lawless laws were brought into operation. To keep peace in India, hundreds of Indians had to be shot down or hanged, thousands of them had to be thrown into jails, and the number of those who were externed or interned was legions. India had seldom remained contented with the foreign rule, but if there ever was peace in the country, it was the peace of the desert and the tomb.

## CHAPTER V

### DIFFERENT MEANS AND DIFFERENT PARTIES

**I**N order that India might occupy her proper place among the nations of the world, the Indian nationalist thought, it was absolutely necessary that the foreign rule must go and the Indian people be governed by their own chosen representatives. But how to do it ?

Before the advent of Mahatma Gandhi into the field of Indian politics, there were, roughly speaking, three methods which were suggested by Indians of various schools of thought for obtaining freedom. The first was : Open war against the foreigner in order to fight him out of the country by sheer physical force. This was the method that had behind it the verdict of history ; seldom had any country achieved its lost liberty but in this way. The second method was that of guerrilla warfare on modern lines, that is, the use of the bomb and the pistol on such a large scale as to terrify and demoralise the ruling class into leaving the country in sheer disgust. It was argued that the British here were for personal power and profit; if every foreigner in the country regarded his life as unsafe, none would care to remain here for long. In the first case the attack was to be made

by the Indian armies with the backing of almost the whole of the country as was done in 1857; while the followers of the other school of thought encouraged the use of secret societies, the actors naturally being only a small proportion of the total population. The third method that occupied the attention of Indians for freeing their country from the foreign yoke was that of winning concessions from the rulers by argument and flattery on the one hand and by threat and agitation on the other; whatever little was given was to be accepted gratefully, but pressure was to be brought forward from day to day to secure more and more till the country attained full freedom.

The Indian nationalist had tried all these three methods but found them wanting in achieving the object he had in view.

Open war was quite out of the question. If nothing else the modern methods of warfare were such as gave no scope to Indians to utilise their numerical strength successfully. Indians could not raise an independent and well-equipped army ready for the task; and unless such an army was raised no one could hope for victory. It is true that there were people who, impressed by the vastness of Indian population, thought that the Indians, when united, could easily defeat the army of occupation; but they lost sight of the fact that in modern warfare numbers alone cannot accomplish much. A well-equipped army, though comparatively so small as the British army in India, was more than sufficient to con-

trol any number of disorganised and disarmed mobs the Indian revolutionaries could hope to raise. It is well-known that two air-men can easily destroy a whole town in a few minutes ; and one company of soldiers is sufficient to destroy a hundred times its numbers within a day or two. Attempts were made now and then to seduce Indian element in the army, but after the experience of 1857 the Indian soldier as such remained always apathetic to all political movements in the country.

The use of the bomb and the pistol was possible for the Indian revolutionaries ; but the utility of secret societies was at best only limited. There were also some objections against this method on moral grounds. But in reply it was said that in love and war everything was fair, and that foreign occupation was itself so immoral that no means could be considered too low to get rid of it.

Both the above methods had quite a small number of active votaries; but the third method had the support of almost all the Indians who were seriously interested in the political uplift of the country. They put their trust in the honesty of the British satesmen and thought they could get Swaraj by appealing to the good-will and good sense of the rulers. Most of them thought that the Indians were immediately fit for Swaraj, but in as much as the British people were not prepared to grant them their due all at once they should wait for some time

more to achieve their object. Successive instalments of constitutional reforms, in their opinion, were steps in the right direction ; and from the vantage ground obtained through such reforms they could proceed farther and farther as the chance came their way. Those who believed in this line of thought were called Liberals.

The rising generation in India did not agree with these views. The humdrum methods of the Liberal politicians did not appeal to the Indian nationalists of the new school of thought ; they wanted to chalk out for themselves a more independent line of action.

As has already been said Indians wanted Swaraj for the following, among other, reasons :—

1. That the chances for the infliction of public wrongs by the Government may be minimised ;
2. To cut down the heavy military burden ;
3. To end class distinctions ;
4. To make bureaucracy responsible to public opinion ;
5. To enable Indians to make rapid progress in education and sanitation ;
6. For the development of agriculture and other industries ;
7. To stop the financial and intellectual drain ;
8. To enable Indians to become masters in their own house as other people were in their's.

According to the Nationalists the Liberals were not able to do much in any of these directions. The number of Indian grievances increased from day to day ; hundreds of Indians were imprisoned every year for political offences which in many cases consisted merely in the public expression of opinions unpalatable to the bureaucracy. Since 1857 repression was never before resorted to on such a large scale as after the introduction of the Morley-Minto or Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. The Reformed Governments could not lighten the burden of the tax-payer. The financial and intellectual drain could not be stopped. The military burden grew abnormally and India had no money left to substantially accelerate the speed of progress as regards education, industries, health and sanitation. An irresponsible bureaucracy still ruled the country ; public opinion was never before so contemptuously disregarded ; and Indians were like so many dumb driven cattle, without any effective power in the government of their country.

Under the new regime this was just as it ought to have been. It were the fools or sluggards, stated the Nationalist, who pinned their faith in the beneficence of the Reforms. The Liberals were not for the fight which the circumstances of the country demanded ; hence they welcomed the chance of hob-nobbing with the officials. It was made clear by more than one British politician that the



bureaucracy in the country was to enjoy the same privileges and powers which it had always enjoyed before. Mr. Lloyd George's speech about the permanency of the " steel-frame services " was only an outspoken expression of opinion always held by so many responsible Englishmen both in India and England. At the rate of progress which the Liberals could expect under the Reforms, the Indianisation of the army and other services would have taken one hundred years, universal education two hundred years, and the improvement of industries to the European level five hundred years, if not more. The fact was that as long as the Indians did not get the power to decide about their own destiny any tinkering with the bureaucratic system of Government was worse than useless.

The Nationalist argued that the present system of administration did not require mending, it required ending. As long as the Indians did not get the power of self-determination all talk about progress was deceptive. No bureaucracy had ever relinquished power of its own accord ; why should it be expected that the bureaucracy in India would act differently ?

The benefactors of India thought that Indians were mere children in the art of Government ; they should be either cajoled or flogged into discipline and submissiveness. Freedom was a useful weapon but its edge was sharp, and friends and patrons of India could not allow the Indian

people to hurt themselves by its uncontrolled use. One could call such ideas arrogant ; but when have the rulers of a subject nation not been arrogant ? Indian Nationalists thought that those who expected to become politically free through the efforts of the bureaucracy expected something unnatural ; all such expectations were doomed to fail. The British did not give willingly self-government to their own cousins in Ireland and South Africa till the Irish and the Afrianders had to fight for it; how could the “benighted niggers” in India, who had nothing in common with the British, expect more generous treatment ? The difference between the angle of vision of the British and the Indians was so great that according to the new generation any compromise between the two was quite impossible ; those who believed in the gospel of mutual understanding between the two were regarded as old fossils completely out of touch with the new currents of life.

It may be mentioned here that there was a time when Mahatma Gandhi, like the Liberals; believed in mutual co-operation of both the races, he was a moderate of the moderates in this respect. Originally Mahatma Gandhi advocated non-co-operation with the “Satanic Government” only because he could not support it so long as it did not make amends for atrocities in the Punjab and for treating the Khilafat question in a cavalier fashion. The conception of attainment of Swaraj

through non-co-operation was a bye-product of a purely non-political and ethical movement. Mahatma Gandhi allowed the proposition for the attainment of Swaraj to be tagged on to his non-co-operation resolution only with great hesitation. In the beginning it mattered little to him whether India was ruled by the Indians or by the British ; he wanted *Ram Raj*, the rule of Truth ; whether it was by the British or by the Indians, it mattered little to him. Like the Liberals he hoped to convert the British to his own view-point and achieve freedom for India through their co-operation. It was long after when all his hopes had been shattered that he allied himself with those who called themselves Nationalists but who were called by their opponents as Extremists.

It is not difficult to understand the psychology of the Indian political parties. The old political party, the party of the Moderates or Liberals, at one time consisted of men whose names were on the lips of every Indian child. Surendra Nath Bannerji, Gokhale, Mehta, Wacha, Rash Behari Ghosh, were names to conjure with in the country. They had fought India's battles at a time when Indian masses knew nothing of politics. It was they who first realized in what an irresponsible manner the bureaucracy carried on its work of administration in the country. Some British statesmen tried to extend a sympathetic hand towards the Indian nation, but the men in power

almost always checked that warm impulse. If after so many troubles, after so many sacrifices and disappointments, the Moderates saw a more hopeful vision of the Indian future than they had ever seen before, and if they felt profoundly grateful for this or that concession, they were not to be blamed for it. Men who could not even dream of seeing an Indian in any Provincial Secretariate, might easily be excused if they felt enthusiastic about the new order of things when an Indian could find an honoured place even in the British Cabinet. Their attitude was that of an aged woman who had remained barren for fifty years and was in her old age blessed with a child, even though a cripple. All joy and happiness of such a parent are excusable though young girls may not quite appreciate her enthusiasm.

The Nationalists were proud that their's was the most important party. The country, as a whole, was with them in their up-hill and difficult task. They were brought up on the traditions which gave special weight to the natural rights of man. They saw how during the Great War even small and weak nations had stood up to defend their rights. They could not understand how one could morally justify the rule of one nation by another in the face of well-known principles of self-rule and self-determination. Their aim and desire were to see India free, free from all outside restraints. They could believe in British

friendship, but British interference in the affairs of India was regarded by them as extremely harmful to the interests of both the countries.

The party in power in India consisted mainly of the British, both inside and outside the present system of Government. Their idea was that they had conquered India and as such had every right to rule it in the way they thought best. They said they had found India in chaos and it was they who had restored order and peace to it. Indians, in the opinion of some of them, were barbarians; it was the white man's burden to civilize them. The British also felt that they were denied in India the comforts of home-life; they had to work here under very unfavourable circumstances and in the interest of an alien race; they had to make enormous sacrifices in living in the hot regions of India, thousands of miles away from the congenial atmosphere of Britain. They were, therefore, entitled to every privilege and power. Last but not least, some of them still thought that India was conquered by the sword and that it should be kept in the same conquered position by the use of the sword, both for the good of Indian masses and also because of the vested British interests.\*

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\*"Do the mover and his friends think that a war-worn, war-wise, race like the British, who won their Empire at the point of the sword and have kept it by the sword ever since, are to be talked out of the war wisdom by arm chair critics? .....If they do, they have learnt little from their association with our race." General Sir Philip Chetwoode, the Commander-in-Chief of India, in a recent speech in the Council of State.

Men with such ideas, men who had enjoyed exceptional powers and privileges, would naturally feel disturbed when the gloomy prospect of the loss of those powers and privileges appeared on the horizon. It may be regarded as a weakness, but it is a common human weakness to cry when something is snatched away from one's hand which one regards, rightly or wrongly, as quite one's own. If men in the services and their sympathisers outside the services squealed they did so just as privileged classes had done in Greece, Rome, France, England and Russia before them.

Formerly public servants were servants only in name ; they were masters of all that they surveyed ; in fact they constituted in themselves Rulers, Governors, Politicians and Administrators. For such persons the idea to really serve, and serve under the representatives of another race for whom they had no very great respect, was indeed abhorrent. "One long whine" of the British bureaucracy against national agitation could best be appreciated only after one has understood the mentality that is at the back of such ideas.

It was unfortunate that the Moderates did not understand that if the Extremists were not prepared to feel satisfied with small mercies, it was because of the spirit of the times. It was a democratic age, and democracy is never satisfied with half measures. These were the days of brave and bold men ; caution and timidity had no place in the

political vocabulary of those days. The British also refused to see that the world was not the same as it was before. Whether they had conquered India by the sword or not, whether their rule was in the best interests of the country or not, there was no place for their former old position in the country any more. One nation could never remain subservient to another for all time. Nature and its laws were against it. If they desired to be esteemed by Indians as their friends, they could do so only by helping them to stand on their own feet as free men. Any other course was sure to prove injurious to both the sides.

On the other hand the Nationalists did not fully realize the obligations of those who thought that the future of the country lay in their own hands. It was necessary for them to be charitable to their opponents, whether Moderates or Bureaucrats. The future victory lay with them. Like all great conquerors they ought to act carefully and earnestly but they should also be magnanimous towards them who stood against them. The Moderates had served well the national cause in the past. They were now too old to run with them in the coming race. If the old men desired to move slowly they did not deserve to be abused for it. Old men, bound as they were by mental and moral shackles, deserved every consideration from the new generation. If the Moderates felt unable to work with the Extremists, they deserved to be treated with

the same honour as the world treats old warriors, whose joints had grown stiff and whose flesh was flabby.

For the reactionaries in the Services and their supporters in England, the Extremists could not have the same respect as the Moderates had; but there was no reason to assume the same attitude towards the reactionaries as the latter assumed towards the rising generation. It was a fact that the British in India were likely to lose something substantial; it did not matter whether that something really belonged to them or not. When they were face to face with such a loss, and they felt troubled at the idea, they deserved sympathy or pity and not angry words. The British were fighting a losing battle; none but the most uncharitable could be harsh to the losing side.

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE BIRTH OF NON-CO-OPERATION

**W**HATEVER the inter-communal or inter-party differences, all Indians were united on one point,—that India should get Swaraj as soon as possible. That was the opinion of all Indians, whether they were Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Jews, Christians, Moderates, Extremists, or Terrorists. But there were differences among them as to the methods to be used to win Swaraj. Some advocated armed revolution, others were for terrorism, and yet another section advocated methods in vogue in countries where the Governments were responsible to public opinion. But the people in general realised that terrorism, at the utmost, could serve only to advertise Indian grievances and draw pointed attention of the world towards them. It was true that no other country had ever before gained freedom from autocratic yoke, foreign or indigenous, without an armed revolution; but the question was: Were Indians in a position to wage a violent war with the foreign government? Indians were unarmed, and even if they were armed like other nations, it was next to impossible to organise a successful revolution against the disciplined and well-equipped forces of an established government. The methods of warfare

itself ; but the politician was non-violent only in action, his thoughts and words were as violent as those of any violent revolutionary. With the one non-violence was a policy, with the other it was a religious creed. But the politician wisely threw himself in the back-ground because he wanted to give the religious enthusiast full scope, and also because he could not afford to oppose the founder of the creed without risk of losing his own influence. Otherwise in the Non-cooperation campaign the politician would have liked to introduce the elements of hate and anger in the shape of social and economic boycott of his opponents.

It was found to be one of the great merits of the new method that it was available to every Indian who wanted to adopt it. Mahatmaji's movement revealed to Indians that the salvation of their country lay in their own hands ; they need not beg for favours, nor need they resort to violence in their fight for national freedom. What was necessary was to bid good-bye both to terrorism and to active co-operation. One appealed to the spirit of fear and the other to the spirit of mercy of those who stood against Indian rights and aspirations. No conscientious and self-respecting nation could resort to these methods, least of all the nation that boasted of ancient civilisation which was conspicuous for its noble idealism. It was argued that Indians must set aside the use of pin-pricks of doubtful value ; they must do something more

serious ; they must adopt such a course as would ensure without doubt the entire overthrow of the irresponsible autocracy. That was possible only through self-preparation—self-preparation of a kind that could make Indians entirely free from outside help.

Thousands of Indians almost unanimously came to believe that self-preparation leading to Civil-Disobedience was the only effective method to get them Swaraj, the number of those who still believed in Anarchical or Fabian methods was left very small ; they were either those who had not sufficient patience to work peacefully or those whose patience was never exhausted and were prepared to wait indefinitely for something better to turn up. Indians in general did not belong to either of these schools ; it was only the select few who could take pride in calling themselves Liberals or Terrorists : the masses had nothing much to do with either of these parties.

The Non-co-operation movement was accused of being revolutionary both in its design and operation. The Liberals were amongst the foremost to level this charge. The Non-co-operator was not afraid to plead guilty to it. He was certainly out for a peaceful revolution because all other methods to gain his object had failed. He could not bear the agony of serfdom lying down. He meant business with the rulers and no idle flirtation. The Non-co-operator felt sure of his success. The irresponsible bureaucracy,

upon whom even the British Government had pronounced the sentence of death, had lost all prestige in the country ; the tree was shaking, its roots were rotten ; only a strong gust of wind was required to overthrow it.

Taking all these circumstances into consideration, it was in September 1920, at the special session of the Congress at Calcutta, that the advocates of non-co-operation made a bold bid for the leadership of the country. Notwithstanding the strenuous opposition of the Moderates, Mahatma Gandhi carried through the Congress the following resolution :—

“In view of the fact that on the Khilafat question both the Indian and Imperial Governments have signally failed in their duty towards the Mussalmans of India, and the Prime Minister has deliberately broken his pledged word given to them and that it is the duty of every non-Moslem Indian in every legitimate manner to assist his Mussalman brother in his attempt to remove the religious calamity that has overtaken him ;

And in view of the fact that in the matter of the events of 13th April, 1919 both the said Governments have grossly neglected or failed to protect the innocent people of the Punjab, and punish officers guilty of unsoldierly and barbarous behaviour towards them and have exonerated Sir Michael O'Dwyer who proved himself, directly or indirectly, responsible for most of the official crimes, and callous to the sufferings of the people placed under his administration, and that the debate in the House of Commons and specially in the House of Lords betrayed a woeful lack of sympathy with the people of India and showed virtual support of the systematic terrorism and frightfulness adopted in the Punjab, and that the latest

Viceregal pronouncement is proof of entire absence of repentance in the matters of the Khilafat and the Punjab;

This Congress is of opinion that there can be no contentment in India without redress of the two aforementioned wrongs and that the only effectual means to vindicate national honour and to prevent a repetition of similar wrongs in future is the establishment of Swarajya. This Congress is further of opinion that there is no course left open for the people of India but to approve of and adopt the policy of progressive, non-violent Non-co-operation inaugurated by Mr. Gandhi until the said wrongs are righted and Swarajya is established.

And in as much as a beginning should be made by the classes who have hitherto moulded and represented public opinion, and in as much as Government consolidates its power through titles and honours bestowed on the people, through schools controlled by it, its law courts and its legislative councils, and in as much as it is desirable in the prosecution of the movement to take the minimum risk and to call for for the least sacrifice, compatible with the attainment of the desired object, this Congress earnestly advises.

- (a) surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in local bodies ;
- (b) refusal to attend Government Levees, Durbars, and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials or in their honour ;
- (c) gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by Government, and in place of such schools and colleges, establishment of National schools and colleges in the various provinces ;
- (d) gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants, and establishment of private arbitration courts by their aid, for the settlement of private disputes ;

were now so changed that no country, least of all India, could hope to defeat the professional armies possessed of the latest weapons of offence and defence. A man with a little intelligence and forethought could easily understand that it was quite impossible to free India in that way.

The policy of the Liberals or Moderates was also as useless and ineffective as that of the Anarchists. Such methods could be of great help where the Government was constituted by the will of the governed ; but when a Government was imposed from outside such methods could never succeed. Not only the past history of India, but the history of all other countries supported this view. No government had ever before parted with power unless it was compelled to do so. The Moderates were losing all hold over political India, and only a few were left who still believed in the efficacy of a policy that confined itself to petitions, speeches and resolutions.

It was in such an atmosphere that Mahatma Gandhi preached the gospel of Non-co-operation. The argument advanced in its support was very simple. The foreign Government in India was fed on Indian co-operation ; when it did not respond to Indian wishes Indians had a right to withdraw that co-operation, and when that co-operation was withdrawn Government must tumble down like a building whose foundations had been undermined.

The movement in its initial stages was the product of a sort of religious mentality. The irresponsible system of government in India was regarded in its treatment of the wishes of the people under its charge as "Satanic." In dealing with the Khilafat question and the question of making amends for the excesses committed in the Punjab during the Martial Law regime, the Government was charged with having conducted itself in an unjust and immoral manner. Hence, it was argued, no conscientious man could co-operate with it unless the government purged itself of its guilt. Non-co-operation originating in a religious atmosphere was necessarily to be non-violent; violence and religion could not go together.

Non-co-operation was stated to be a very effective weapon. The orthodox non-co-operator believed in the theory that evil could not flourish for a long time when it found no support from the elements that surrounded it. A wicked government must reform its character or die of starvation when those who supported it refused help. But supposing the movement did not succeed in achieving its object, the religious enthusiast was satisfied that as long as he did not take part or support the evil system, it did not matter much to him if his efforts did not bring the desired result; his own duty was clear, and he was satisfied in doing it and asking others, by precept and example, to do likewise.

The theory was an old one, and had been

presented to the world, time after time, under different names and different garbs by persons of more or less religious bent of mind. But its introduction in Indian politics was solely due to the farsightedness of Mahatma Gandhi whose unique personality had won for him the respect and admiration of all sections of his country-men. He was believed to be as selfless as any saint of old, as honest as a new born baby, and as sagacious as any statesman could claim. His enthusiasm in the efficacy of his gospel was as catching as that of any prophet. No wonder that the movement became so rapidly popular under his guidance and leadership.

But there were very few who really understood or appreciated the true significance of the new movement. The Indians in general took it up more as a political weapon than as a religious formula. They had tried other methods to win the freedom of the country but without success; they now wanted to try this weapon. It was not difficult to realise that the foreign rule in India was based on their co-operation; if all Indians refused to help the Government in the administration of the country, it was logically correct to assert that the Government could not go on for a very long time. They were the real pillars of the administrative edifice; if the pillars were removed the edifice would fall down under its own weight. Indians should not serve the Government, Indians should not pay taxes; no one, they argued, could then go on to have a free sway over them.



At the same time it was clear that their aim was not as much to make the so-called evil-doers repent of their crimes as to bring such pressure on them as might force them to leave the field of their operations for want of support. If Indians in general took to non-violence they did so not because they felt any compunction against the use of violence but because a great majority of them came to think that in the circumstances violence would not pay.

The number of those who looked at the movement from the point of view of pure political expediency was much larger than it was generally believed to be ; but the religious enthusiast and the politician both were equally ardent in supporting the programme of Mahatma Gandhi as it gave ample opportunity for self-expression to both of them. For the one it was a good method of agitation to rouse the public to offer active resistance to the present system of government ; for the other it was a preparation for the spiritual uplift of the nation to the stage where unjust domination became automatically impossible.

In discussing the programme of the Non-co-operation Movement it should be kept in view that it was due to Mahatmaji's great and wholesome influence that the movement was kept free from the element of hatred ; the politician was ever ready to make it more aggressive and vindictive. With the religious enthusiast non-violence in thought, word, and deed, was as important as non-co-operation

- (e) refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia ;
- (f) withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the Reformed councils, and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who may despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election ;
- (g) boycott of foreign goods;
- (h) And in as much as Non-co-operation has been conceived as a measure of discipline and self-sacrifice without which no nation can make real progress, and in as much as an opportunity should be given in the very first stage of Non-co-operation to every man, woman and child, for such discipline and self-sacrifice, this Congress advises adoption of Swadeshi in piece-goods on a vast scale, and in as much as the existing mills of India with indigenous capital and control do not manufacture sufficient yarn and sufficient cloth for the requirements of the nation, and are not likely to do so for a long time to come, this Congress advises immediate stimulation of further manufacture on a large scale by means of reviving hand-spinning in every home and hand-weaving on the part of the millions of weavers who have abandoned their ancient and honourable calling for want of encouragement."

Later on, in December of the same year, the resolution was confirmed by the Congress in its ordinary annual session at Nagpur with a few minor changes. The Nagpur resolution ran :—

"Whereas in the opinion of the Congress the existing Government of India has forfeited the confidence of the country ;

Whereas the people of India are now determined to establish Swaraj ; and

Whereas all methods adopted by the people of India

prior to the last Special Session of the Indian National Congress have failed to secure due recognition of their rights and liberties and the redress of their many and grievous wrongs, more specially in reference to the Khilafat and the Punjab;

Now this Congress, while reaffirming the resolution on Non-violent Non-co-operation passed at the special session of the Congress at Calcutta declares the entire or any part or parts of scheme of the Non-violent Non-co-operation, with the renunciation of voluntary association with the present Government at one end and the refusal to pay taxes at the other, should be put in force at a time to be determined by either the Indian National Congress or the All India Congress Committee and that in the meanwhile to prepare the country for it, effective steps should continue to be taken in that behalf :—

- (a) by calling upon the parents and guardians of school children (and not the children themselves) under the age of 16 years to make greater efforts for the purpose of withdrawing them from such schools as are owned, aided or in any way controlled by Government and concurrently to provide for their training in national schools or by such other means as may be within their power in the absence of such schools ;
- (b) by calling upon students of the age of 19 and over to withdraw without delay, irrespective of consequences, from institutions owned, aided or in any way controlled by Government, if they feel that it is against their conscience to continue in institutions which are dominated by a system of government which the nation has solemnly resolved to bring to an end, and advising such students either to devote themselves to some special service in connection with the non-cooperation movement or to continue their education in national institutions ;

- (c) by calling upon trustees, managers and teachers of Government affiliated or aided schools and municipalities and local boards to help to nationalise them ;
- (d) by calling upon lawyers to make greater efforts to suspend their practice and to devote their attention to national service including boycott of law courts by litigants and fellow lawyers and the settlement of disputes by private arbitration ;
- (e) in order to make India economically independent and self-contained, by calling upon merchants and traders to carry out a gradual boycott of foreign trade relations; to encourage hand-spinning and hand weaving, and in that behalf, by having a scheme of economic boycott planned and formulated by a committee of experts to be nominated by the All India Congress Committee ;
- (f) and in as much as self-sacrifice is essential to the success of Non-co-operation by calling upon every section and every man and woman in the country to make the utmost possible contribution of self sacrifice to the national movement ;
- (g) by organising Committees in each village or group of villages with a provincial central organisation in the principal cities of each province for the purpose of accelerating the progress of Non-co-operation ;
- (h) by organising a band of national workers for a service to be called the Indian National Service ; and
- (i) by taking effective steps to raise a national fund to be called All India Tilak Memorial Swarajya Fund for the purpose of financing the foregoing National Service and the Non-co-operation movement in general.

The Congress congratulates the nation upon the progress made so far in working the programme of

Non-co-operation, specially with regard to the boycott of councils by the voters and claims, in the circumstances in which they have been brought into existence, that the new councils do not represent the country, and trusts that those who have allowed themselves to be elected in spite of the deliberate abstention from the polls of an overwhelming majority of their constituents, will see their way to resign their seats in the councils, and that if they retain their seats in spite of the declared will of their respective constituencies in direct negation of the principle of democracy, the electors will studiously refrain from asking for any political service from such councillors.

This Congress recognises the growing friendliness between the Police and the soldiery and the people, and hopes that the former will refuse to subordinate their creed and country to the fulfilment of orders of their officers, and, by courteous and considerate behaviour towards the people, will remove the reproach hitherto levelled against them that they are devoid of any regard for the feelings and sentiments of their own people.

And this Congress appeals to all people in Government employment, pending the call of the nation for resignation of their service, to help the national cause by importing greater kindness and stricter honesty in their dealings with their people and fearlessly and openly to attend all popular gatherings whilst refraining from taking any active part therein, and more specially by openly rendering financial assistance to the national movement.

*Non-violence.* This Congress desires to lay special emphasis on Non-violence being the integral part of the non-co-operation resolution and invites the attention of the people to the fact that Non-violence in word and deed is as essential between people themselves, as in respect of the Government, and this Congress is of opinion that the spirit of violence is not only contrary to the growth of a true spirit of democracy but actually retards the enforcement (if necessary) of the other stages of Non-co-operation.

Finally in order that the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs may be redressed and Swarajya established within one year, this Congress urges upon all public bodies, whether affiliated to the Congress or otherwise, to devote their exclusive attention to the promotion of Non-violence and Non-co-operation with the Government and inasmuch as the movement of Non-co-operation can only succeed by complete co-operation amongst the people themselves, this Congress calls upon the leading Hindus to settle all disputes between Brahmans and Non-Brahmans, wherever they may be existing, and to make a special effort to rid Hinduism of the reproach of untouchability, and respectfully urges the religious heads to help the growing desire to reform Hinduism in the matter of its treatment of the suppressed classes."

Whatever opposition was shown to Mahatmaji's programme in Calcutta was levelled down at Nagpur, and all those who wanted to work earnestly for the freedom of the country joined their hands with him. By the new gospel Mahatmaji took the whole country by storm, and few except some old arm-chair politicians could afford to remain outside the sphere of his influence. In fact the question became : With Mahatmaji, or Nowhere. Such was the strength and appeal of his personality ?

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## CHAPTER VII

### THE BOYCOTTS

**I**N the last chapter we quoted the Calcutta and Nagpur resolutions at full length. It was necessary because these resolutions form the basis of the whole of the present Indian national movement. But the programme can easily be summed up under the following heads :—

1. The boycott of titles.
2. The boycott of Government and Government aided Schools and Colleges.
3. The boycott of Government Courts and the establishment of Panchayats ;
4. The boycott of Legislatures ;
5. The boycott of Government services ;
6. The boycott of Drink ;
7. The organisation of the country under the Congress flag ;
8. The boycott of Foreign cloth and use of Khadi ;
9. The Hindu-Mohammadan Unity ;
10. The uplift of the Depressed ;
11. The civil disobedience of repressive laws ; and
12. The non-payment of taxes.

The framers of the programme admitted that the country was not prepared for complete non-co-operation with the Government ; they knew of the shortcomings of the stuff in their hands. The programme therefore was progressive and was to be worked up gradually. It started with such harmless items as the boycott of titles and school, the use of Khadi, and the enlistment of members for the Congress, and was to lead to mass civil disobedience and the non-payment of taxes only if absolutely necessary. Surely there was no better remedy to peacefully overthrow a bad system of Government than the one proposed.

Before, however, we narrate how the Non-co-operation movement proceeded it is necessary that we should discuss the Non-co-operation programme in some detail. In the discussion that follows, Gandhiji's scheme, its underlying motives, and its aims, are not strictly adhered to. What is given here is the representation of the mind and heart of an ordinary Non-co-operator ; how he understood Mahatmaji's programme and in what manner he tried to work it out.

The main motive behind the five boycotts mentioned in the last chapter was to dethrone the Government and its supporters from the pedestal which they occupied in the estimation of the people. The glamour of Titles, Services, Schools, Courts and Legislatures had captivated the Indian mind. The Non-co-operator aimed at destroying this



illusion. Although he did not succeed in winning over a very large number of title-holders, school teachers, lawyers or Government servants to his side, he succeeded in breaking the charm of these institutions from the mind of the Indian people.

**1. The Boycott of Titles.** To the unthinking this appeared to be the weakest point in the whole of the programme. The personal interest of the title-holder required him to support the authorities through thick and thin; to ask him to give up the title for which he had worked hard and may be had also spent much money, was to ask him to cut the soil from under his own feet. And for what? For Swaraj under which all his newly acquired position would at best be of doubtful value. To ask the most ardent and most selfish supporters of the Government to give up their titles was to ask the most reactionary community in the country to make a direct sacrifice of its own interests. It was not then strange that the response to this item of the Non-co-operator's programme was so feeble; not even five in a thousand gave up their titles.

But the Non-co-operator was no fool. Though he sincerely wished the "reclamation" of the title-holder, he knew as well as any one else that he was appealing in the wilderness. But the idea was not so much to succeed in winning over the title-holder to the Congress as to pull the title-holder down from the position he occupied in society.

The title-holder was regarded as the leader of the society, and the influence of his leadership was used in favour of the bureaucracy. The Non-co-operator completely changed that position. There was a time when people were prepared to spend large sums of money to acquire Government titles but after the Non-co-operation movement it was difficult to find self-respecting men who would care to make special effort to get a title.

**2. The Boycott of Legislatures.** The Legislatures were a part and parcel of the Executive Government of the country. Through the reformed Legislatures, Government tried to proclaim to the world that the present system of administration in India was based on the popular will. The Non-co-operator by boycotting the Legislatures laid bare the hollowness of the claim. In the two elections, the first and the third after the reforms, scarcely twenty per cent of the voters went to the polls ; this proved to the hilt that the Government ruled the country against the wishes of the people. So far the Government had always declared that it represented the masses and that the Nationalists represented nobody. The boycott of the Legislatures clearly showed that even amongst the niggardly narrow circle of voters whom Government had enfranchised it could have no backing.

Some of the Nationalists argued that the people's party could strengthen its hands by going to the Legislatures and making them unworkable. Those

who made the proposal argued that the bureaucracy deceived the world opinion by bruiting about that it was ruling the country with the help of the representative Legislatures; such deception required to be exposed and the best manner to do so was to capture the Legislatures. The Non-co-operator replied that if bureaucracy thought that it could succeed in deceiving the public in this way, no body was more deceived than the bureaucracy itself. Every one who cared to understand Indian conditions knew that a vast majority of political-minded Indians were opposed to the present system of government; no amount of misrepresentation could deceive any body on that point.

When advocating council-entry programme some people talked of tearing the veil from the face of the irresponsible administration and of exposing it in all its autocratic nakedness. Those who argued thus forgot that those who could swallow pledges made to Indians about the integrity of the Turkish Empire, those who could countenance the Punjab wrongs, the Guruka Bagh beating and the Jallianwala massacre, could also easily put up with the new surprise with which some of the Indians wanted to face them in the Legislatures. The Non-co-operator's reply was that "the exposure business" should cease; Indians should lay their hands on something more effective. How long were they to waste their time and energy in such fatuities?

**3. The Boycott of Government-aided Educational Institutions.** The freedom movement required thousands of enthusiastic young workers ; there was no better field for their recruitment than colleges and schools. It was the young men who could really understand the movement and work it to success with the fire and zeal born of youth.

The Government kept a strong grip over the Indian population through the educational institutions. If there were some educated persons in India who loved independence and were otherwise successful, they were not the product of this system, they were so inspite of its crushing weight. The Non-co-operator wanted to destroy this system and replace it by one more suitable to the national needs.

The campaign against the schools and colleges resulted in winning over for the national movement a good number of recruits, but produced no other important result. The Non-co-operator was not able to meet adequately the demand for national education. The new institutions, started under the influence of the new movement, were few in number and not so well organised. Those of the young men who wanted to serve their country at all cost came out of their classes at the call of the leaders, but others who desired to devote themselves to their education could not be attracted in very large numbers by the hurriedly got up national institutions started to meet the demand.

It was not very easy to start new and well-equipped institutions all in a day.

Had the public schools and colleges which received aid from the Government come forward to take their proper place in the national movement, the Non-co-operator's efforts would have been more fruitful than was actually the case. But those who were in charge of educational institutions were mostly old men brought up in the old way of thinking ; it was very difficult for them to break old ties. Want of courage did not allow them to tread new paths and face new risks. Their stock argument was that the Government money was public money and the educational institutions had every right to make use of it ; they also argued that the time of the young men was too valuable to be employed to sub-serve transitory political ends.

The Non-co-operator was not convinced by this sort of argument. Money no doubt was Indian, but was it proper to accept it from the hands of those who ruled the country against its best interests ? According to the Non-co-operator, the money coming from such a source was tainted and no self-respecting body could accept it.

That the time of the students was valuable was true, but of greater value, argued the Non-co-operator, was the struggle in which the country was engaged. When the liberties of Egypt, Italy, France, and even of England were at stake, the student community in all those

countries came forward to do their bit. During the Great War all Turkish, German, Greek, Austrian, French, and English Universities were emptied and every young man was at the front to fight his country's battles. There was no reason that in India, if her people seriously desired to achieve freedom, the case should be otherwise.

As long as Indian educational institutions had any relations, monetary or otherwise, with the Government, young men brought up there could not help being infected with the slave mentality—the natural product of the system. The system had also the effect of denationalising those whom it pretended to educate. In the circumstances, it was argued, the best what the student community could do was to leave the educational institutions and devote themselves whole-heartedly to the cause of the freedom of the country.

**4. The Boycott of Services.** According to the Non-co-operator, when there was such a difference of opinion between the people and the Government—and on such vital points as the honour of the country and its economic interests—no self-respecting and patriotic Indian should care to serve under the present administration. In fact it was the Indians in the Government services who were mainly responsible for the political degradation of the country. If Indians in Government service were to withdraw their hands from the machinery, it was sure to collapse.

The Non-co-operator was not able to influence this class of the people much ; India's poverty was the greatest obstacle. But he was successful in creating in the mind of a section of the people a contempt for Government service ; those who were in the employ of the Government lost influence with the people and received little respect from them : they were publicly described as "Toadies", parasites, sycophants and traitors.

**5. The Boycott of Courts and the Establishment of Panchayats.** One acknowledges the right of the Government to rule over one when one goes to its courts for the settlement of one's disputes. For the Non-co-operation to be genuine and effective it was necessary that Indians should have no connection with such institutions.

Before the advent of Non-co-operation the political leadership of the country was mainly in the hands of the lawyers. It was they who first conceived the desire for freedom ; but their efforts in the cause of the country's political freedom were seldom whole-hearted ; it was only by the way that they interested themselves in politics. Their activities in the political sphere helped the lawyers in their profession ; hence, apart from patriotic motives, they generally thought it necessary to be known as politicians of some sort. The Non-co-operator did not like leadership of this kind. He made it plain that all true patriots should shun the courts as something evil. Siding with the people on the platform and with the

bureaucracy in the courts could not be allowed ; for the new struggle the tactics of Mr. Facing-Bothways were quite out of place.

The result of this move was that lawyers as a class were obliged to leave politics alone and consequently, forfeit the privileges of leadership. Those who cared more for their country than for their purse came out of the courts and joined the movement ; others, and they formed the majority, were left out of the political field. In the beginning it appeared that it would be difficult for the national movement to repair this loss ; but the later experience proved that the loss was far outweighed by the incoming of a new class of workers who, though not so astute or clever as the lawyers, were more selfless, more earnest and more sincere.

The ordinary frequenter of courts is not a very good specimen of humanity. To ask the people to forgive the criminal, or to expect the criminal to bow down before the decision of the national courts or Panchayats, was to ask the people to subscribe to a large order. Similarly in civil suits it was no easy to press the wrong party to accept the speedy and just decisions of mutual friends when the procedure in the regular courts offered such a latitude for delay and deception. But it was surprising to find that in some parts of the country the work of Panchayats so thoroughly superseded the work of the regular courts that the officials were somewhat alarmed. Wherever it was found that the Panchayats



were successfully functioning every effort was made to punish the people interested in their formation.

The Non-co-operator was, however, successful in lowering the prestige of the courts in the eyes of the public. By offering no defence when prosecuted, the Non-co-operator claimed to strike a deadly blow to the reputation for even-handed justice of the British Raj. Moreover all fear of punishment for the so-called political offences was completely driven out of the heart of Indians. When one does not defend oneself when attacked, often the strength of the attack is automatically weakened. The courts, no doubt, could send people to prison but the terror of the prison life was gone ; people often went to the jails as one goes to the house of a bride.

It was objected that when the police prosecuted the innocent and no defence was advanced, the police obtained undue power over the Non-co-operator. It was, therefore, advocated by some that Indians should not go to the courts of their own free-will and that all the private disputes should be settled by the Panchayats; but that when they were dragged to the courts for some political offence they should give there a good fight; they should put the Government machinery to as much harassment as possible and make every effort to expose its weakness by establishing their own innocence.

The objection had some weight, but was not really as strong as it appeared at first sight. The punishment of the innocent roused the country to its sense of duty more than any release after a doubtful fight. Also it did not look proper in the mouth of a Non-co-operator to call the Government unjust in one breath and to beg for justice in the other. The offering of defence in a court of law was the very negation of the spirit of Non-co-operation.

Similar was the case of the lawyers who wished to be regarded as Non-co-operators but desired to be allowed to practice in courts and pay a part of the income thus received in support of the national movement. It is true that the new movement demanded sacrifices from the lawyer class as from few others ; but it would have been wrong to call such persons Non-co-operators as went to the courts and worked there as limbs of the law. Non-co-operation and Satyagraha could not tolerate divided allegiance. A Satyagrahi could not serve two masters.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### SOCIAL UPLIFT & POLITICAL POWER

**A**S has been shown in the previous chapter, the Five Boycotts could do no more than to exert some moral pressure; but if the Indians desired to knock the present system of Government on the head, it was necessary that they should put their own house in order : they should devote special attention to the social and economic uplift of the masses and organise themselves into a force that should prove an equal match to one of the strongest administration in the world. The second part of the programme was designed from this point of view.

**1. Hindu-Mohammadan Unity.** Foreign Governments thrive on internal disunity. The Non-co-operator took upon himself the task of welding all Indians into one nation. It was gratifying to see that responsible leaders of the various communities earnestly set their face against the evils engendered by bigotry and communalism. Only a short while before the Non-co-operation Movement the different communities in India regarded those persons as their leaders and real well-wishers who could strongly attack the rival communities. But that day was gone; the discord-monger was at once dubbed an enemy of the people and his propaganda was given a cold shoulder by all sensible persons.

It was seen that the main difficulty was created by those people who fought for Government favours and tried to drag behind them their respective communities when in fact only their own personal and selfish interests were involved. The cries of "Hindu interests in danger," and "Moslem interests in danger", were mischievously raised, and the ignorant people often fell into the trap laid for them by those who were prepared to sell their country and religion for a few crumbs that fell from the bureaucracy's table. Unfortunately the general public did not always see through this dirty game.

Apart from such persons, those who flourished on the prejudices of the ignorant also tried to create bad blood between the different communities. Their cry was that Swaraj meant Hindu Raj or Moslem Raj, and that all honest Mohammadans and Hindus should fight against it. Before the Hindus they put forth exaggerated tales of Moslem tyranny ; before the Moslems Hindu exclusiveness was paraded as an argument against having any confidence in them. Such people intentionally overlooked the fact there were about seven crores of Mohammadans in India and about twenty crores of Hindus, and that no single community had the power to rule for long over the other ; that for the peace and prosperity of the country it was of the greatest importance that all should live side by side in good-will and friendship, and that they could make satisfactory progress only if the

Government of the country was in the hands of the Indians themselves.

The Non-co-operator did his best to instil this idea in the mind of the public. But after Gandhiji ordered a halt, and the Civil Disobedience movement was stopped temporarily, some of the erstwhile Non-co-operators relapsed to the old ways of thinking and created a lot of mischief.

**2.The Depressed.** Allied to the Hindu-Mohammadan unity question was the question of the uplift of the depressed classes. According to the Non-co-operator, Indians should hang down their heads in shame for so far neglecting the advancement of this class of people. The Indian agitation against the English for securing equality of treatment could have no great force so long as Indians had their own helots and down-trodden.

The enormity of the crime against the depressed classes was almost unrivalled in the whole history of mankind. The depressed classes seem to have been put down in the beginning of the Hindu history on what must be regarded as political or racial grounds. If one blamed the British for not treating Indians as their equals, how could one excuse Indian tyranny against the untouchables? These poor people were not only politically disabled, they were also put beyond the pale of society. This was the worst sort of tyranny ever invented by any race. According to the Non-co-operator, the Indians did not deserve to be free as long as they tolerated the inhuman treatment

meted out to the submerged classes by their own countrymen.

The argument that the depressed classes had dirty habits, were ignorant, and as such deserved to be kept at an arm's length was as Satanic as the proposition that Indians should be ruled by the British because they were a backward nation. All the drawbacks amongst the depressed classes were due to their forced isolation from better influences.

The Non-co-operator urged higher class Indians to make amends for this crime before claiming equality with others. In his opinion untouchability and other social disabilities of the depressed needed to be removed at once; he advocated special facilities for their education and pleaded for liberal opportunities for their economic betterment. The missionary societies were asked to take in hand immediately the work of reclamation and make it clear to the world that when Indians wanted justice for themselves they were prepared to do the same to those who suffered at their hands. In their bad habits the untouchables were not worse than any of those who belonged to the so-called high classes; a great many of the untouchables were morally as good as caste Hindus; it was only the vanity of the wicked that desired to keep them down.

**3. The Use of Khadi.** Economic drain and political subjection go together. For India economic independence was as important as political freedom.

For the Non-co-operator nothing was more to the point to this end than the exclusive use of Khadi, the hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. Indians could produce as much cloth in India as they required. To send out about sixty crores of rupees for it every year to foreign countries was sheer madness. It showed not only lack of foresight and patriotism, but also a criminal neglect of duty to the best interests of the masses.

The Non-co operator achieved remarkable success in this respect. His insistence that only hand-made cloth should be used, greatly improved the condition of the poverty-ridden masses in certain localities. Spinning and weaving again became cottage industries of universal importance from which almost everyone expected to be benefitted. The import figures went down steadily and the figures indicating progress of the indigineous industry went up in the same proportion. All this meant so much money saved to the country, not to the great mill owners alone but also to the poor and the needy. About eighty per cent. of the Indians were agriculturists, and a great majority of them had no occupation for half the year. The extensive use of Khadi gave them back their lost bye-employment.

In the beginning Government officials tried to express some lip sympathy with this item of the Non-co-operator's programme ; but the veneer was very thin. Those who used Khadi were looked upon with suspicion and often punished. Peaceful

picketting was prohibited, and those found persuading people to use Indian made cloth were sent to prison.

In the beginning the movement was restricted to propaganda for the production and use of Khadi. This naturally meant the boycott of foreign cloth. Later on the boycott of foreign cloth assumed greater importance than the use or production of Khadi ; and still later the boycott of foreign cloth came to mean more and more the boycott of British cloth, which naturally led to the boycott of British goods in general. Mahatmaji and his immediate followers, however, never countenanced the movement to boycott British cloth only or the boycott of the British goods as such. Mahatmaji was more for Swadeshi than for the boycott of the British products. But to a considerable section of the people Swadeshi meant nothing else than the boycott of the British goods.

**4. The Boycott of Drink.** It was another feather in the cap of the Non-co-operator. Temperance societies could not achieve five per cent. of the success during the last fifty years which Non-co-operation was able to achieve in a few years. District after district became dry and that too notwithstanding the active opposition of the Excise Department.

The Non-co-operator was successful in raising the moral tone of the people amongst whom the drink habit played such a havoc. He had to suffer heavily, but he bore the cross cheerfully. The



marvellous results achieved in the cause of making some parts of India dry were quite sufficient to outweigh all the suffering he had to undergo in this connection.

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The last steps in the Non-co-operator's programme were mass Civil Disobedience and the Non-payment of Taxes ; but before the Congress could take the responsibility of asking the people to adopt those measures, it was necessary to properly organise it on democratic lines. Mahatma Gandhi devoted himself to this work in quite a thorough manner.

**5. Organisation of the Country under the Congress Flag.** Before Non-co-operation was started the Indian politician had no organised opinion at his back. Wonderful progress was now made in this direction. This was due to the organisation of the Congress on democratic lines. In order to bring sufficient pressure to bear upon the Government to do what the country wanted, it was absolutely necessary, that the People's Parliament should have not only the passive support of the whole country, as it always had, but also the active co-operation of all. In other countries people had won freedom by the efforts of such few as were prepared to make great sacrifices. When violent methods were used what was necessary was the maximum of sacrifice, though only a small number of men was required to make that sacrifice fruitful. Now when the struggle was to be peaceful, at least as far as the people themselves were

concerned, what was necessary was the maximum number of men making though only the minimum of sacrifice. It was urged by the more ardent non-co-operators that if Indians could create a separate organisation—running parallel to the machinery of the Government,—no power on earth could prevent them from achieving their object.

Organisation on a large scale required a lot of money. It was a happy idea that Mahatma ji established the Tilak Swaraj Fund to organise the movement. More than a crore of rupees was collected within a few months, and thus the Non-co-operator got ample funds to feed the movement. Similarly the number of Congress members was increased to almost abnormal figures ; at one time it reached as high a figure as two millions. No important village was left without a Congress Committee of its own with a good number of men and women as active Congress workers. Later on when the Congress Committees had been properly organised and the movement to collect funds and enlist Congress members had caught the imagination of the people, thousands of volunteers were raised to further strengthen the movement and serve as a front line of the non-violent Congress forces.

The number of Congress members and Congress volunteers, and the funds raised to support the movement soon went up so high as to far surpass the most enthusiastic estimates of the Non-co-operators. It was almost an unprecedented phenomenon.

in the political history of the world; few examples could be found where so many men came forward to voluntarily support a body that was working openly in a hostile spirit against a well-established and powerful Government.

#### **6. Civil Disobedience and Non-payment of Taxes.**

All other items of the Non-co-operator's programme, were, more or less, related to the preparatory stage; it was only the Civil Disobedience and Non-payment of Taxes that could finally decide the issue. The boycott of Titles, Legislatures, Courts and Schools was undertaken, apart from other grounds, in order to impress the Government with the weight of the public opinion against its policy and actions; the use of Swadeshi, boycott of drink, Hindu-Mohammadan unity, and uplift of the depressed classes, were the means for the self-purification and economic advancement of the people; the establishment of the Panchayats and the organisation of the country into Congress units served the purpose of gathering Indian forces into a compact whole; the boycott of the services was meant to isolate the bureaucracy; but it was the Civil Disobedience and the Non-payment of Taxes that were expected finally to overthrow the administration.

There were people who publicly objected to the whole conception of the Non-co-operation Movement; but their number was not very large and their motives not always above board. At the same time one had to admit that there was a

good number of well-meaning sympathisers of the national movement whose objections against Civil Disobedience were not unpalatable. It was said that Indians might be peaceful by nature, but there was every danger of violence at their hands when provoked to anger by the measures which the Government was bound to adopt against the defiance of constituted authority. It was also said that there were people in India like the Sikhs in the Punjab and the Pathans in the North-West Frontier Province who were extremely excitable; any movement of defiance of law amidst such an inflammable material was certain to produce deplorable results. Every effort was made to overwhelm Mahatmaji with the serious consequences of "playing with fire and gunpowder." But it was soon found that all such forebodings were wrong. The behaviour of the Sikhs at Guru-ka-Bagh in the Amritsar District, and later on of the Pathans during the semi-military regime in their province, proved to the satisfaction of even the most strenuous detractors of the Indian martial races that once they had taken the pledge to remain non-violent their strength of conviction enabled them to honour the pledge to the fullest extent. As a matter of fact, it was the opinion of many that though the Sikhs and Pathans were excitable, their brave and undaunted spirit enabled them to become better Satyagrahis than many others.

Some people objected to the proposal for the Non-payment of Taxes on constitutional grounds.

The Non-co-operator's reply was simple. No one was bound to obey a constitution in the framing of which he had no hand. From such a point of view India had no constitution. No Government had a right to tax a people unless it worked according to their wishes. British bureaucracy in India was not responsible for its actions to the Indian people ; they had, therefore, every right to stop supplies to it. " No representation, no taxation." Under certain circumstances when a government refused to act according to the wishes of the people—and all other means to bring it round to the people's point of view had failed—direct action became a necessity, as great a necessity as floods for the purification of stagnant waters. In extreme cases direct action and revolt against Government, argued the Non-co-operator, were as legitimate weapons as, under ordinary circumstances, petitions and prayers.

The Non-co-operator was convinced that India could not come into her own unless a good number of men were prepared to rise against the present system of government in a peaceful revolt and to this end he directed all his energies. In his heart of hearts he was convinced of the righteousness of his cause ; he did not any further worry about legal quibbles that confused the real issue.

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## CHAPTER IX

### THE FIRST CAMPAIGN

**D**URING the whole of the year 1921, the Non-violent Non-co-operation Movement proceeded with a success not expected even by its most ardent supporters. As already stated, in a very short time, Mahatmaji was able to collect one crore of rupees for the movement and enlist about a crore of members of the Congress. Khadi became the fashion of the day, and Swadeshi received an impetus as never before. Hundreds of lawyers gave up their profession and the number of the students who boycotted the Government educational institutions amounted to thousands. Scores of national educational institutions were started; villages had their own private courts to settle disputes; and cottage industries that were supposed to be dead beyond recovery regained new life and vigour.

The Government, on its side, met Non-co-operation with repressive measures. Law was set in motion to curtail the liberty of association, speech and press. About fifty thousand Congressmen were thrown in to the jails. Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali were amongst the foremost to receive the attention of the Government. Though, under Gandhiji's advice, they had repudiated certain former speeches of theirs, they were unexpectedly arrested and

imprisoned. Later on leaders of the movement like C.R.Das and Moulana Azad in Bengal, Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab and Moti Lal Nehru in the U. P., were also arrested and imprisoned.

The bureaucrats had invited the Prince of Wales to India to prop up their lost prestige. Under Mahatmaji's advice the Congress and the Khilafat Committee asked the people to boycott the functions connected with the Prince's visit. It was announced that the Prince was to arrive in India on November 17, 1921. On October 27, Mahatmaji wrote :—

“ I have no manner of doubt that the Prince's visit is being exploited for advertising the “benign” British rule in India. It is a crime against us if His Royal Highness is being brought for personal pleasure and sport when India is seething with discontent, when the masses are saturated with disaffection towards the system under which they are governed, when famine is raging in Khulna and the Ceded Districts and when an armed conflict is raging in Malabar : it is a crime against India to spend millions of rupees on a mere show when millions of men are living in a state of chronic starvation. Eight lakhs of rupees have been voted away by the Bombay Council alone for the pageant.

The visit is being heralded by repression in the land. In Sind over fifty-six non-co-operators are in the gaol. Some of the bravest of Mussalmans are being tried for holding certain opinions. Nineteen Bengal workers have been just imprisoned including Mr. Sen Gupta, the leading Barrister of the place. A Mussalman Pir and three other selfless-workers are already in gaol for a similar “crime.” Several leaders of Karnatak are also imprisoned and now its chief man is on trial for saying what I have said repeatedly in these columns and what Congressmen have been saying all over during the past twelve months. Several leaders of the Central Provinces have been

similarly deprived of their liberty. A most popular doctor, Dr. Paranjpye, a man universally respected for his selflessness, is suffering rigorous imprisonment like a common felon. I have by no means exhausted the list of imprisonments of non-co-operators. Whether they are a test of real crime or an answer to growing disaffection, the Prince's visit is, to say the least, most inopportune. There is no doubt that the people do not want His Royal Highness to visit India at the present juncture. They have expressed their opinion in no uncertain terms. They have declared that Bombay should observe hartal on the day of his landing at Bombay. It is a clear imposition upon the people to bring the Prince in the teeth of their opposition.

What are we to do in the circumstances? We must organise a complete boycott of all functions held in the Prince's honour. We must religiously refrain from attending charities, fetes or fireworks organised for the purpose. We must refuse to illuminate or to send our children to see the organised illuminations. To this end we must publish leaflets by the million and distribute them amongst the people, telling them what their duty in the matter is and it would be true honour done to the Prince if Bombay on the day of his landing wears the appearance of a deserted city.

But we must isolate the Prince from the person. We have no ill-will against the Prince as man. He probably knows nothing of the feeling in India, he probably knows nothing about repression. Equally probably he is ignorant of the fact that the Punjab wound is still bleeding, that the treachery towards India in the matter of the Khilafat is still rankling in every Indian breast, and that on the Government's own admission the reformed councils contain members who, though nominally elected, do not in my sense represent even the few lakhs who are on the electoral rolls. To do or to attempt to do any harm to the person of the Prince would be not only cruel and inhuman, but it would be on our part a piece of treachery towards ourselves and him; for we have voluntarily



pledged ourselves to be and remain non-violent. Any injury or insult to the Prince by us will be a greater wrong done by us to Islam and India than any the English have done. They know no better. We can lay no such claim to ignorance ; we have with our eyes open and before God and man promised not to hurt a single individual in any way connected with the system we are straining every nerve to destroy. It must therefore be our duty to take every precaution to protect his person as our own from all harm.

In spite of all our effort, we know that there will be some who would want to take part in the various functions from fear or hope or choice. They have as much right to do what they like as we have to do what we like. That is the test of the freedom we wish to have and enjoy. Let us, whilst we are being subjected by an insolent bureaucracy to a severe irritation, exercise the greatest restraint. And if we can exhibit our firm resolve to have nothing to do with it by dissociating ourselves from its pageant, at the same time that we show forbearance towards those who differ from us, we would advance our cause in a most effective manner."

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, who was believed to have in some measure the confidence of Lord Reading, and who seemed to be anxious that India should extend a hearty welcome to the Prince, tried to bring about reconciliation between Gandhiji and the Viceroy. A deputation headed by Panditji waited on His Excellency at Calcutta, on December 21, and requested him to call a Round Table Conference of all the political parties in India. Lord Reading regretted that it was impossible even to consider the convening of a conference if "agitation in open and avowed defiance of law was meanwhile to be continued." Mahatmaji's reply to the charge was as follows :—

"I must confess that I have read the Viceregal utterance with deep pain. I was totally un-prepared for what I must respectfully call his mischievous misrepresentation of the attitude of the Congress and the Khilafat organisations in connection with the visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. Every resolution passed by either organisation and every speaker has laid the greatest stress upon the fact that there was no question of showing the slightest ill-will against the Prince or exposing him to any affront. The boycott was purely a question of principle and directed against what we have held to be unscrupulous methods of bureaucracy. I have always held, as I hold even now, that the Prince has been brought to India in order to strengthen the hold of the Civil Service Corporation which has brought India into a state of abject pauperism and political serfdom. If I am proved to be wrong in my supposition that the visit has that sinister meaning, I shall gladly apologise.

It is equally unfortunate for the Viceroy to say that the boycott of the welcome means an affront to the British people. His Excellency does not realise what grievous wrong he is doing to his own people by confusing them with the British administrators in India. Does he wish India to infer that the British administrators here represent the British people and that agitation directed against their methods is an agitation against the British people? And if such is the Viceregal contention and if to conduct a vigorous and effective agitation against the methods of bureaucracy and to describe them in their true colours is an affront to the British people, then I am afraid I must plead guilty. But then I must also say in all humility, the Viceroy has entirely misread and misunderstood the great national awakening that is taking place in India. I repeat for the thousandth time that it is not hostile to any nation or any body of men but it is deliberately aimed at the system under which Government of India is being to-day conducted, and I promise that no threats and no enforcement of threats by the Viceroy or any body of men will strangle that agitation or send to rest that awakening.

I have said in my reply to Lord Ronaldshay's speech that we have not taken the offensive. We are not the aggressors, we have not got to stop any single activity. It is the Government that is to stop its aggravatingly offensive activity aimed not at violence but against a lawful, disciplined, stern but absolutely non-violent agitation. It is for the Government of India and for it alone to bring about a peaceful atmosphere if it so desires. It has hurled a bomb-shell in the midst of material rendered inflammable by its own action and wonders that the material is still not inflammable enough to explode. The immediate issue is not now the redress of the three wrongs; the immediate issue is the right of holding public meetings and the right of forming associations for peaceful purpose. And in vindicating this right we are fighting the battle not merely on behalf of non-co-operators but we are fighting the battle for all schools of politics. It is the condition of any organic growth, and I see in the Viceregal pronouncement an insistence upon submission to a contrary doctrine which an erstwhile exponent of the law of liberty has seen fit to lay down upon finding himself in an atmosphere where there is little regard for law and order on the part of those very men who are supposed to be custodians of law and order. I have only to point to the unprovoked assaults being committed not in isolated cases, not in one place, but in Bengal, in the Punjab, in Delhi and in the United Provinces. I have no doubt that as repression goes on its mad career, the reign of terrorism will overtake the whole of this unhappy land. But whether the campaign is conducted on civilised or uncivilised lines, so far as I can see, there is only one way open to non-co-operators, indeed I contend even to the people of India. On this question of the right of holding public meetings and forming associations there can be no yielding. We have burnt our boats and we must sail onward till that primary right of human beings is vindicated.

Let me make my own position clear. I am most anxious for a settlement. I want a Round Table

Conference. I want our position to be clearly known by everybody who wants to understand it. I impose no conditions but when conditions are imposed upon me prior to the holding of a conference, I must be allowed to examine those conditions, and if I find that they are suicidal, I must be excused if I don't accept them."

At the end of December, 1921, the Indian National Congress held its annual session at Ahmedabad. Mahatmaji was appointed the Dictator and formally put in charge of the no-tax campaign that was to be launched in the Bardoli Taluka. The following resolution of the Ahmedabad Congress gives a clear idea of how the fight was to be carried on by the national volunteers.

"Whereas, since the holding of the last National Congress, the people of India have found, from actual experience, that by reason of the adoption of non-violent non-cooperation, the country has made great advance in fearlessness, self-sacrifice and self-respect, and whereas, the country on the whole is rapidly progressing towards Swaraj this Congress confirms the resolution adopted at the special session of the Congress at Calcutta and reaffirmed at Nagpur and places on record the fixed determination of the Congress to continue the programme of non-violent non-cooperation with greater vigour than hitherto in such manner as each province may determine till the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs are redressed and Swaraj is established and the control of the Government of India passes into the hands of the people from that of an irresponsible corporation.

And whereas, by reason of the threat uttered by His Excellency the Viceroy in his recent speeches and the consequent repression started by the Government of India in the various provinces by way of disbandment of Volunteer Corps and forcible prohibition of public and even committee meetings in an illegal and high-handed manner and by the arrest of many Congress workers in

several provinces, and whereas this repression is manifestly intended to stifle all Congress and Khilafat activities and deprive the public of their assistance, this Congress resolves that all activities of the Congress be suspended as far as necessary and appeals to all, quietly and without any demonstration to offer themselves for arrest by belonging to the Volunteer organisations to be formed throughout the country in terms of the resolution of the Working Committee arrived at in Bombay on the 23rd day of November last, provided that no one shall be accepted as volunteer who does not sign the following pledge :—

With God as witness I solemnly declare that

1. I wish to be a member of the National Volunteer Corps.
- (2) So long as I remain a member of the Corps I shall remain non-violent in word and deed and shall earnestly endeavour to be non-violent in intent since I believe that as India is circumstanced, non-violence alone can help the Khilafat and the Punjab and result in the attainment of Swaraj and consolidation of unity among all the races and communities of India whether Hindu, Musalman, Sikh, Parsi, Christian or Jew.
- (3) I believe in and shall endeavour always to promote such unity.
- (4) I believe in Swadeshi as essential for India's economic, political and moral salvation and shall use handspun and handwoven Khaddar to the exclusion of every cloth.
- (5) As a Hindu I believe in the justice and necessity of removing untouchability and shall on all possible occasion seek personal contact with and endeavour to render service to the submerged classes.
- (6) I shall carry out the instructions of my superior officers, and all the regulations not inconsistent with the spirit of this pledge prescribed by the Volunteer Board or the Working Committee or any other agency established by the Congress.

- (7) I am prepared to suffer imprisonment, assault, or even death for the sake of my religion and my country without resentment.
- (8) In the event of my imprisonment I shall not claim from the Congress any support for my family or dependents.

This Congress trusts that every person of the age of 18 and over will immediately join the volunteer organisations.

Notwithstanding the proclamations prohibiting public meetings, this Congress advises the holding of committee meetings, and of public meetings, the latter in enclosed places and by tickets and by previous announcements at which as far as possible only speakers previously announced shall deliver written speeches, care being taken in every case to avoid risk of provocation and possible violence by the public in consequence.

This Congress is further of opinion that civil disobedience is the only civilized and effective substitute for an armed rebellion whenever every other remedy for preventing arbitrary, tyrannical and emasculating use of authority by individuals or corporations has been tried and therefore advises all Congress workers and others, who believe in peaceful methods and are convinced that there is no remedy save some kind of sacrifice to dislodge the existing Government from its position of perfect irresponsibility to the people of India to organise individual civil disobedience and mass civil disobedience when the mass of people have been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-violence and otherwise in terms of the resolution thereon of the last meeting of the All India Congress Committee held at Delhi.

This Congress is of opinion that, in order to concentrate attention upon civil disobedience whether mass or individual, whether of an offensive or defensive character, under proper safeguards and under instructions to be issued from time to time by the Working Committee or the Provincial Congress Committee concerned, all other Congress activities should be suspended whenever and

wherever and to the extent to which it may be found necessary.

This Congress calls upon all students of the age of 18 and over, particularly those studying in the national institutions and the staff thereof, immediately to sign the foregoing pledge and become members of National Volunteer Corps.

In view of the impending arrests of a large number of Congress workers this Congress whilst requiring the ordinary machinery to remain intact and to be utilised in the ordinary manner whenever feasible, hereby appoints until further instructions Mahatma Gandhi as the sole executive authority of the Congress and invests him with the full power to convene a special session of the Congress or of the All India Congress Committee or the Working Committee, such powers to be exercised between any two sessions of the All India Congress Committee and also with the power to appoint a successor in emergency.

This Congress hereby confers upon the said successor and all subsequent successors appointed in turn by their predecessors his aforesaid powers.

Provided that nothing in this resolution shall be deemed to authorise Mahatma Gandhi or any of the aforesaid successor to conclude any terms of peace with the Government of India or the British Government without the previous sanction of the All India Congress Committee to be finally ratified by the Congress specially convened for the purpose, and provided also that the present creed of the Congress shall in no case be altered by Mahatma Gandhi or his successors except with leave of the Congress first obtained."

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## CHAPTER X

### NEGOTIATIONS AND DEBACLE

**A** LITTLE before the Congress session that passed the above resolution it seemed that Lord Reading was prepared to step down from his high pedestal and come to terms with Gandhiji. The Viceroy was very anxious to have for the Prince of Wales a hearty welcome from the Indian people. But when that hope was frustrated he treated all attempts at peace with anger and disdain.

Malaviyaji even then did not lose heart or hope. With the help of Mr. Jinnah, he convened, in January 1922, an All-Parties Conference at Bombay. Mahatamaji did not think that the Government was ready to accede to the national demand. He had seen that when Lord Reading formerly appeared anxious for "peace", it was only to side-track the rising tide of the national movement and to secure for the Prince an adequate welcome from India. Lord Reading would not agree even to release public workers like the Ali Brothers, how could one hope that he would be willing to meet even half-way the Congress demands that were meant to change the whole structure of the Government machinery in India !



While the negotiations for a Round Table Conference were going on Mahatmaji addressed the following open letter to Lord Reading :—

To, His Excellency the Viceroy, Delhi.

Sir,—Bardoli is a small tehsil in the Surat district in the Bombay Presidency, having a population of about 87,000 all told.

On the 29th ultimo, it decided under the presidency of Mr. Vithalbhai Patel to embark on mass civil disobedience, having proved its fitness for it in terms of the resolution of the All India Congress Committee which met at Delhi during the first week of November last. But as I am perhaps chiefly responsible for Bardoli's decision, I owe it to Your Excellency and the Public to explain the situation under which the decision has been taken.

It was intended under the resolution of the All India Congress Committee before referred to, to make Bardoli the first unit for mass civil disobedience in order to mark the national revolt against the Government for its consistently criminal refusal to appreciate India's resolve regarding the Khilafat, the Punjab, and Swaraj.

Then followed the unfortunate and regrettable riots on the 17th November last in Bombay resulting in the postponement of the step contemplated by Bardoli.

Meantime repression of a virulent type has taken place with the concurrence of the Government of India, in Bengal, Assam, the United Provinces, the Punjab, the Province of Delhi and in a way in Bihar and Orissa and elsewhere. I know that you have objected to the use of the word 'repression' for describing the action of the authorities in these Provinces. In my opinion, when an action is taken which is in excess of the requirements of the situation, it is undoubtedly repression. The looting of property, assaults on innocent people, brutal treatment of the prisoners in jails, including flogging, can in no sense be described as legal, civilized or in any way necessary. This official lawlessness cannot be described by any other term but lawless repression.

Intimidation by non-cooperators or their sympathisers to a certain extent in connection with Hartals and picketing may be admitted, but in no case can it be held to justify the wholesale suppression of peaceful volunteering or equally peaceful public meetings under a distorted use of an extraordinary law which was passed in order to deal with activities which were manifestly violent both in intention and action, nor is it possible to designate as otherwise than repression action taken against innocent people under what has appeared to many of us as an illegal use of the ordinary law nor again can the administrative interference with the liberty of the Press under a law that is under promise of repeal be regarded as anything but repression.

The immediate task before the country therefore is to rescue from paralysis freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of Press.

In the present mood of the Government of India and in the present un-prepared state of the country in respect of complete control of the forces of violence, non-cooperators were unwilling to have anything to do with the Malaviya Conference whose object was to induce Your Excellency to convene a Round Table Conference. But as I was anxious to avoid all avoidable suffering, I had no hesitation in advising the Working Committee of the Congress to accept the recommendations of that Conference.

Although, in my opinion, the terms were quite in keeping with your own requirements, as I understood them through your Calcutta speech and otherwise, you have summarily rejected the proposal.

In the circumstances, there is nothing before the country but to adopt some non-violent method for the enforcement of its demands, including the elementary rights of free speech, free association, and free Press. In my humble opinion, the recent events are a clear departure from the civilized policy laid down by Your Excellency at the time of the generous, manly and unconditional apology of the Ali Brothers, *viz.*, that the Government

of India should not interfere with the activities of non-co-operation so long as they remained non-violent in word and deed. Had the Government policy remained neutral and allowed public opinion to ripen and have its full effect, it would have been possible to advise postponement of the adoption of civil disobedience of an aggressive type till the Congress had acquired fuller control over the forces of violence in the country and enforced greater discipline among the millions of its adherents. But the lawless repression (in a way unparalleled in the history of this unfortunate country) has made immediate adoption of mass civil disobedience an imperative duty.

But before the people of Bardoli actually commence mass civil disobedience, I would respectfully urge you as the head of the Government of India finally to revise your policy and set free all the non-co-operating prisoners who are convicted or under trial for non-violent activities and declare in clear terms the policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country whether they be regarding the redress of the Khilafat or the Punjab wrongs, or Swaraj or any other purpose and even though they fall within the repressive sections of the Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code or other repressive laws subject always to the condition of non-violence. I would further urge you to free the Press from all administrative control and restore all the fines and forfeitures recently imposed. In thus urging I am asking Your Excellency to do what is to-day being done in every country which is deemed to be under civilized Government. If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days of the date of publication of this manifesto, I shall be prepared to advise postponement of Civil Disobedience of an aggressive character till the imprisoned workers have after their discharge reviewed the whole situation and considered the position *De Novo*. If the Government make the requested declaration, I shall regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion

and shall therefore have no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding the public opinion without violent restraint from either side and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands. Aggressive Civil Disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strictest neutrality or refuses to yield to the clearly expressed opinion of the majority of the people of India.

The Prince of Wales landed at Bombay on the 17th of November. All public functions connected with the visit were boycotted by the public. A general *hartal* greeted His Royal Highness wherever he went. Efforts were made by the "loyalists" to stage command performances to show that all was well with India. The general public was exasperated at the attempt of the bureaucracy to deceive the Prince and the world on this point. Some excesses were committed by the crowds at Bombay gathered there to show their resentment against the peregrinations of the Prince. Mahatmaji was much disturbed by these ebullitions of the public feeling. He wavered in the execution of his design; but when later on he heard of the mob excesses at Chauri Chaura, where about twenty policemen were killed, he at once cried a halt. The Civil Disobedience Movement was immediately stopped, and the Baradoli campaign of non-payment of taxes given up. The advancing "army" was thus ordered to retire before it could come to grips with the opposing forces.

The All India Congress Working Committee, under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, adopted the following resolution at Bardoli on February 12, 1922 ;—

“The Working Committee deplores the inhuman conduct of the mob at Chauri Chaura in having brutally murdered constables and wantonly burned the police thana and tenders its sympathy to the families of the bereaved.

In view of Nature's repeated warnings every time mass civil disobedience has been imminent some popular violent outburst has taken place indicating that the atmosphere in the country is not non-violent enough for mass civil disobedience, the latest instance being the tragic and terrible events at Chauri Chaura near Gorakhpur, the Working Committee of the Congress resolves that mass civil disobedience contemplated at Bardoli and elsewhere be suspended and instructs the local Congress committees forthwith to advise the cultivators to pay the land revenue and other taxes due to the Government and whose payment might have been suspended in anticipation of mass civil disobedience and instructs them to suspend every other preparatory activity of an offensive nature.

The suspension of mass civil disobedience shall be continued till the atmosphere is so non-violent as to ensure the non-repetition of popular atrocities such as at Gorakhpur or hooliganism such as at Bombay and Madras respectively on the 17th November 1921 and 13th January last.

In order to promote a peaceful atmosphere, the Working Committee advises, till further instructions, all Congress organisations to stop activities specially designed to court arrest and imprisonment, save normal Congress activities including voluntary *hartals*, wherever an absolutely peaceful atmosphere can be assured and for that end all picketing shall be stopped save for the bonafide

and peaceful purpose of warning the visitors to liquor shops against the evils of drinking such picketing to be controlled by persons of known good character and specially selected by the Congress Committee concerned.

The Working Committee advises till further instructions the stoppage of all volunteer processions and public meetings merely for the purpose of defiance of the notification regarding such meetings ; this, however, shall not interfere with the private meetings of Congress, and other committees or public meetings which are required for the conduct of the normal activities of the Congress."

Lord Reading took the fullest advantage of Mahatmaji's new move. He threw Mahatmaji into the prison and went back on all his promises to allow the national movement a free expression.

Those of Mahatmaji's colleagues who were outside the prisons had not the stamina to bear courageously the fresh burden of responsibility that fell on their shoulders. A sort of rout set in and the Non-co-operation Movement quickly came to a standstill. In June 1922, a Committee was appointed by the Congress to report whether Indians were prepared anywhere to take up civil disobedience and the non-payment of taxes. In pursuance of the policy chalked out by Mahatmaji this committee reported that the atmosphere was not favourable to any aggressive steps on the part of the Congress. On the 29th November, 1922, the All India Congress Committee, after considering the report of the Civil Disobedience Committee, passed the following resolution :—

" This Committee accepts the report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee on the question of civil disobedience, and resolves (a) that the country is not prepared at present to embark upon general mass civil disobedience, but in view of the fact that a situation may arise in any part of the country demanding an immediate resort to mass civil disobedience of a limited character for which the people are ready, e.g., the breaking of a particular law or order, or the non-payment of a particular tax, this Committee authorises Provincial Committees to sanction such limited mass civil disobedience on their own responsibility if the conditions laid down for mass civil disobedience by this committee in its resolution No. 2\* dated the 4th November, 1921 are fulfilled ;

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\*Resolution No. 2 passed by the All India Congress Committee at its meeting held at Delhi, on the 4th and 5th November 1921.

"Whereas there is not much over one month, for the fulfilment of the national determination to establish Swaraj before the end of the year and whereas the Nation has demonstrated its capacity for exemplary self-restraint by observing perfect non-violence over the arrest and imprisonment of the Ali Brothers and other leaders, and whereas it is desirable for the Nation to demonstrate its capacity for further suffering and discipline sufficient for the attainment of Swaraj.

The All India Congress Committee authorises every province, on its own responsibility, to undertake Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes, in the manner that may be considered the most suitable by the respectable Provincial Congress Committee subject to the following conditions :—

In the event of individual Civil Disobedience the individual must know hand spinning and must have completely fulfilled that part of the programme which is applicable to him or her e. g. he or she must have entirely discarded the use of foreign cloth and adopted only handspun and hand woven garments, must be a believer in Hindu-Muslim unity and in unity amongst all the communities professing different religions in India as an article of faith, must believe in Non-violence as absolutely essential for the redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs and the attainment of Swaraj and if a Hindu by his personal conduct show that he regards untouchability as a blot upon Nationalism ;

*(Continued on next page.)*

(b) that resolution No. 2 passed by this committee at Delhi on the 4th November which gives Provincial Committees all the powers necessary to determine upon a resort to civil disobedience of any kind whatever be restored, and resolution 1 clause 1 passed on the 24th February to the extent it conflicts with that resolution be cancelled ; provided that general mass civil disobedience is not permissible.

Thus was sealed, at least for the time being, the fate of the Non-co-operation Movement. The child was stifled in its very birth.

Whatever little enthusiasm was left in the mind of the Non-co-operator was still further damped by the Hindu-Muslim riots that occurred in various parts of the country. Multan, Malabar, Kohat, Amritsar, Lahore, Nagpur—all witnessed serious communal rioting, accompanied by loot, arson and murder. Communal news-papers were largely at the bottom of the feelings of hatred that were engendered on both sides ; but the real cause of the trouble

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*(Continued from the last page.)*

In the event of mass Civil Disobedience a District or Tehsil should be treated as a unit, and therein a vast majority of the population must have adopted full Swadeshi and must be clothed out of cloth hand-spun and hand-woven in that District or Tehsil, and must believe in and practice all the other items of Non-co-operation ;

Provided that no civil resister should expect to be supported out of public funds, and members of the families of civil resisters undergoing sentence will be expected to support themselves by carding, hand-spinning and hand weaving or any other means ;

Provided further that upon application by any Provincial Congress Committee it is open to the Working Committee to relax the conditions of Civil Disobedience, if it is satisfied that any condition should be waived."



was the general demoralisation that set in after the sudden and unexpected withdrawal of the Non-co-operation Movement. The evil effects of the retirement at Bardoli razed to the ground almost the whole of the edifice that was built up with so much labour and sacrifice during the year 1921.

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## CHAPTER XI

### MAHATMAJI'S OPTIMISM

**T**HE net result of the Non-co-operation Movement in its first phase, that is, during the years 1920 and 1921, was both encouraging and disappointing. It was encouraging because the Non-co-operation Movement was able to do for the country within two years or so what former political movements could not do in the course of fifty years ; it raised the pitch of political consciousness in India to a height never dreamt of before. Politics so far were the monopoly of the few ; political agitation had seldom before gone below the surface. But now the Swaraj movement became a mass movement ; it was not only the lawyer or the stray merchant who felt interested in politics ; every Indian community regarded it its duty to work and suffer for the political freedom of the country.

Apart from this, and leaving aside the social, educational and economic advantages that accrued from the movement, India's gain in the political sphere was not of a mean order. Formerly the bureaucracy had no respect even for the Moderate opinion in India ; it looked with indifference bordering on contempt upon all advances for co-operation even from

that quarter. But now the British official tried his best to secure co-operation of that class. The Montague Reforms were regarded only as an experiment, and there were very few bureaucrats who wanted, or expected, any success for them ; even the small concessions were looked upon with disfavour and suspicion. But, thanks to the Non-co-operator, the bureaucracy was obliged to work the Reforms in a manner never desired by it in the beginning. The Government was not yet prepared to accede to the Indian demand for complete self-government, but for its own existence it thought it necessary to shower boons right and left to secure the good-will of a certain section of the people. This anxiety to rally the Moderates was the direct outcome of the Non-co-operation Movement. The boast of the Moderates that the Reformed councils were able to achieve in a few months what was not possible for Indians to do during the previous fifty years, was not without some truth ; but the credit for it was not due to the co-operators ; it was due to the Non-co-operators who forced the hands of the Government to treat Indian opinion with some respect.

Notwithstanding all this, there was no doubt that the Non-co-operators had completely failed in their immediate objective. They had promised India Swaraj in one year, but the promise could not be fulfilled. It is true that when promising Swaraj within one year Mahatmaji had put a big "if" before the promise; but this "if" did not appear to him or

to the people to be as big as it later on proved to be. The conditions laid by Mahatmaji were not believed to be difficult to be fulfilled ; in fact Mahatmaji himself expected those conditions to be fulfilled long before the year was out.

Those who think that Mahatmaji put down the time-limit simply to secure a special impetus for the work before him, really do not understand Mahatmaji's mentality. He was quite serious and sincere. He meant what he said and expected the people to fulfil the conditions laid down by him.

As he has himself said so often, Mahatma Gandhi is an optimist by nature ; and like other optimists his expectations are generally not fully realised. At the Amritsar Congress, in 1919, he persuaded the Indian leaders to accept the Montague Reforms because he believed that the British Government were anxious to do justice to India. Men like Tilak were against such a rosy view of the affair, but Mahatmaji persisted in seeing virtue where it did not exist. Consequently, after the publication of the Report of the Hunter Committee and the Treaty of Sevres, he found himself almost completely disillusioned ; he was obliged to retrace his steps and ask the country not to touch the Reforms even with a pair of tongs. At the Calcutta session of the Congress when he declared that Swaraj could come in one year, he again made a similar mistake. He believed that the issue before the country was so simple and the sacri-

fices demanded so small that all Indians would stand up like one man and whole-heartedly support the movement; he also believed that the Government would bend before the public will and that long before the people reached the final stages of the struggle—civil disobedience and the non-payment of taxes—it would come round and make peace with them. Both of his hopes were doomed to failure—neither the country gave the response to the extent he expected nor the Government came round as he had hoped. Thus the movement did not succeed, not because there was something weak or wrong in it, but because those who expected too much from it, and so soon, were wrong in their calculations.

Mahatmajī was often heard to say that moral pressure alone was sufficient to bring Indians Swaraj. Such ideas were based on the political history in the West. There the Government represents the people and is, therefore, responsive to the public opinion. Where a Government is responsible to the people, public opinion and public sufferings produce more telling results than guns and bayonets. In India Government was not responsible to the people; it was not necessary for it to bow down before the public opinion.

Those who believed that the pressure of the constructive items in the Non-co-operation programme was sufficient to subdue the Government, or that the sufferings of the Non-co-operators in jails were sufficient to move its heart, could as well have

believed in moving stones from their dead position by dancing before them. It is easier to charm a mad bull or an infuriated cobra by playing Beethoven before them than to bring round an irresponsible bureaucracy to a reasonable settlement simply by the use of moral pressure.

Before he was imprisoned in 1922, Mahatma Gandhi used to talk of the guilty conscience of the bureaucracy ; he used to say that its feet were tottering because of its guilty mind, and that it was ready to fall down to pieces only if the people were prepared to give it a little more of moral push. How wrong was he in his diagnosis was proved by the unrelenting tone of the dispatches issued from time to time by the Government agents criticising the national movement. To hope to move a soul-less thing by soul force was sheer madness. By over-emphasising this aspect of their efforts, the non-co-operators made themselves ridiculous in the eyes of those who had more knowledge of the inner workings of the Government's heart than the non-co-operators possessed. The Non-co-operator was called an impractical idealist and he certainly deserved that title.

It is said that a European friend of Dr. Tagore once asked him to write three chief strong points and three most weak points in the character of Mahatma Gandhi. In reply Dr. Tagore wrote one word, " Inconsistency, " to cover all the six points, weak and strong. It may not be very easy to understand the mystifying language of the great Indian poet, but

if we were to consider the causes of Mahatmaji's success and failure in the first phase of the Non-co-operation Movement, we would certainly arrive at one word to explain all the vicissitudes through which the movement passed. It was, Mahatma Gandhi's unrestrained optimism that led to the primary success of the Non-co-operation Movement and it was this very optimism that became finally the cause of its failure.

If any movement in the history of the world could be called as one man's movement, it was certainly the Non-co-operation Movement. Not only its conception and genesis but also its life and growth, had all their origin in Mahatmaji's head and heart. He alone was the guide and the operator; all others were followers and tools. The success which the movement achieved in its first stages, obliging even a clever politician like Lord Reading to climb down from his high pedestal and beg Mahatmaji for a Round Table Conference, was solely due to the spirit of enthusiasm, born of optimism, which Mahatmaji had introduced into Indian politics. It was Mahatmaji's personal enthusiasm that caught every body who came into touch with him; it caught and engulfed Indian nationalists as if in a whirlpool; its catching influence was so supreme that even men who had made great name in the field of Indian politics left thinking for themselves and followed Mahatmaji like so many children.

It was this enthusiasm, almost mad in its onrush, that lifted Indians so high, both morally and politically, in their own eyes and in the eyes of the world. The voters deserted the election booths, the students left schools and colleges, the pleaders gave up practice, and the litigants boycotted the courts—all this was done with a joy and self-satisfaction that was unprecedented in India's political history. As already said a crore of rupees was collected in a month and the Congress could count its membership in millions. It was regarded a miracle; and the miracle worker, the great charmer, was Gandhi, that little man with thin bones and still thinner flesh, surcharged through and through with such spiritual force and energy as are seldom found in the constitution of a human being.

And it was this very optimism that wrecked the Non-co-operation Movement before it could reach the final goal. Mahatmaji was wrong in thinking that long before Indians would reach the last item of the non-co-operation programme, long before the start of mass civil disobedience, the Government would come round to reason and agree to the national demand. In the zeal of his enthusiasm he did not make allowance for the "selfish obstinacy" of our friends which afterwards Mahatmaji had to deplore so sorrowfully.

If Mahatmaji was wrong in measuring the responsive virtues of his opponents, he was equally wrong in over-estimating the capacity of his own



followers. For him to think that within a year he would be able to train three hundred million of Indians in the art of non-violent non-co-operation was as great a mistake as his idea that the bureaucracy would be ready to yield and bow before his magical wand if he could muster a sufficient number of Indians to make a spectacular demonstration to overawe them. It was easier to capture a fort by fireworks than dislodge a foreign bureaucracy from its position of power by mere moral pressure, by an agitation that had not yet gained any striking power, that had not got the force to put material pressure on the opponents.

One could not raise a whole nation to the great heights of perfect non-violence in one year, specially when the people regarded the doctrine as something new and when they had adopted it not as an eternal truth but only as a temporary expedient. Indians as a nation, brought and bred from the very dawn of their history in an atmosphere of political violence, could not be, and should not have been expected to become, non-violent in thought, word and deed in the short span of one year. Buddha had failed in this direction before, Christ had failed, and so did Mahatma Gandhi.

It was true that in the present circumstances of India the only path left to her for achieving independence was the path of non-violence, but there were limits to the capacity of the people in this direction which, when once the struggle was

seriously launched, should have been fully taken into consideration. In the circumstances violent methods were not only fruitless and ineffective, they were also otherwise harmful to the best interests of the country ; they helped to retard the progress of a peaceful revolution. It was the duty of all national workers to see that violence was effectively banished out of the Indian struggle for freedom ; but they laid themselves open to the charge of thinking too much of their power or influence if they believed that their efforts could succeed to stop violence altogether. In a country of such large dimensions as India, with a population containing so many heterogeneous elements, with old traditions based on the use of violent methods, it was impossible to expect that even stray cases of violence would not occur, especially in the face of the policy of ruthless repression which the bureaucracy was bound to launch in self-defence. It was sheer self-deception that could allow any serious thinker to accept that violence could be altogether eschewed from the Indian agitation in such a short time as one year, or five years, or even fifty years. One can not change human nature so soon, one could as well make animals fly in the air without wings,

The attack that was to be launched at Bardoli was stopped by Mahatma Gandhi because of the unfortunate display of violence at Chauri Chaura. In great national upheavals which spread over thousands of miles and among millions of people, such

tragedies were unavoidable. However best one might try, some such accidents were sure to happen. These should have disheartened nobody ; one should have no doubt redoubled one's energies to check such regrettable incidents, but when once the country had made up its mind to see the struggle through, one should have gone on with the work without interruption. It was not proper to have an exaggerated opinion of the innate goodness of human nature, and less so of mob nature. It should not have been forgotten that man has not yet outgrown the animal stage ; altogether he is not yet able to completely subdue the lower passions. The stray delinquencies of the few should not have been allowed to stand in the way of the advancement of the race.

By passing restrictive resolutions after Chauri Chaura tragedy Mahatmaji wanted all Indians to become saints before aspiring for Swaraj ; that is what he meant when he asked them to give up altogether the idea of civil disobedience as long as every one of them did not become perfectly non-violent. It was a noble idea but for that reason not necessarily quite appropriate to the circumstances. It is not known whether a saint, had any need of any kind of Swaraj, though it is not difficult to understand that for a certain kind of Swaraj such a condition was quite necessary, yet one can refuse to believe that this condition was so necessary for the sort of Swaraj the Indians desired.

They wanted political freedom, and they could and would certainly achieve it long before all of them became saints. Indians wanted political freedom and for this they were prepared to pay the price which other countries had generally paid for it no more should have been demanded of them.

The halt ordered after Chauri Chaura tragedy was regarded by some as one of the greatest blunders in the history of political tactics. True to his principles, Mahatma Gandhi could see no other course left open to him. His religious principles could allow him no other alternative. But all Indians were not wedded to *Ahinsa* in the same manner as Mahatmaji. Chauri Chaura tragedy proved Mahatmaji a great man, one of the noblest souls the world had ever seen; Chauri Chaura greatly heightened his already high reputation in the field of *Ahinsa*; and with Mahatmaji's greatness the standard of moral virtue was for ever raised to a higher pitch. But all this was gained at the expense of India's freedom. It was not difficult to understand that for a certain type of men the destruction of a few lives was more sinful than the slavery of a whole nation, yet Indians as such did not subscribe to this view. They were prepared to do their best to stop bloodshed from their side; but, knowing their limitations, they could not stop their own non-violent efforts for freedom if they found themselves unable to check certain stray cases of mental aberration or wild frenzy. *Ahinsa* is a great ideal; Indians were

prepared to follow it as best as they could but at the same time they believed that there were other ideals even nobler than *Ahinsa*. The honour of their women, the freedom of their country, were, for instance, more dear to them than the lives of a few persons destroyed by accident.

In stopping the onward march of Indian national forces at Bardoli, Mahatma Gandhi was accused to be guilty of another miscalculation. He perhaps thought that his followers had grown strong enough to challenge the Government any moment he could order them to do so. What he desired by calling off Civil Disobedience was a little more of discipline amongst the rank and file in order to clean his forces of violent tendencies. He could not see the disastrous effects of a re-action, of a retreat of an army when it thought it had almost reached the goal. When ordered to retire at a wrong juncture, even extraordinarily strong armies have often turned into a mob of worthless scare-crows. That proved to be the case with Mahatmaji's followers also. Mahatmaji failed to see the consequences of his action when friends warned him not to take a hasty step.

Mahatma Gandhi said that it required great strength to check an advancing army. Mahatmaji was quite right; certainly his action at Bardoli showed he was a man of great strength; but strength did not mean correct appreciation of a complex situation. Nobody could question Mahatmaji's courage or his spirit of self-sacrifice but only a few

were left who had the same faith in his judgment. The Bardoli decisions showed Gandhiji at his highest in the domain of moral ideas ; but these decisions also demonstrated his weakness in political sagacity as nothing else had done before.

As in some of his other calculations, Mahatmaji made the mistake again of optimistically thinking to much of the powers of his followers. He perhaps thought that Indians could be made ready any time he liked to make huge sacrifices for Khilafat, for Punjab wrongs, and for Swaraj, and that they could be easily rallied together to attack the bureaucracy after little training. But all this proved wrong. Once shaken, it took a pretty long time to set the movement again going.

As it was wrong to cry a halt after Chauri Chaura tragedy so it was wrong to insist on Bardoli conditions as a *sine qua non* for restarting Civil Disobedience. In India there were about 350 million people, of whom more than ten per cent lived on starvation wages and fifty per cent got just enough to keep body and soul together ; out of the remaining forty per cent there were 20 per cent more who got food and cloth just sufficient for their needs. To demand that all men so variously circumstanced, or at least a great majority of them should take active part in the national struggle was, to say the least, extremely unreasonable. In all countries the struggle for freedom is carried on only by a small enthusiastic minority; the majority of the people

wa'ch the struggle only as sympathisers. Why in India should one lay down such hard conditions? To dislodge the bureaucracy in India from its position it was quite sufficient that about one per cent of the Indians be prepared to give it battle; to ask for more was to postpone the issue unnecessarily.

Mahatma Gandhi wanted to make India a laboratory for experiments in Satyagraha. Indian freedom was not his main object; it was only a by-product of his experiments in truth. If the experiment succeeded not only India but the whole of humanity gained. But if the experiment failed India alone was the immediate loser. Mahatmaji's words that truth and righteousness always triumphed were the cause of great consolation to the religiously minded; but those who were not so endowed, whose faith was daily shaken by example after example of might crushing right and wickedness triumphing over virtue, could find little consolation from such phrases.

But we have criticised Mahatmaji wi'hout putting before the reader Mahatmaji's own point of view as regards the abandonment of Bardoli Satyagraha. We will quote him at full length. On March 16, Mahatmaji wrote in *Young India* as follows:—

“ God has been abundantly kind to me. He has warned me the third time that there is not as yet in India that truthful and non-violent atmosphere which and which alone can justify mass disobedience which can be at all described as civil which means gentle, truthful,

humble, knowing, wilful yet loving, never criminal and hateful.

He warned me in 1919 when the Rowlatt Act agitation was started. Ahmedabad, Viramgam, and Kheda erred ; Amritsar and Kasur erred. I retraced my steps, called it a Himalayan miscalculation, humbled myself before God and man, and stopped not merely mass civil disobedience but even my own which, I knew, was intended to be civil and non-violent.

The next time it was through the events of Bombay that God gave a terrific warning. He made me eye-witness of the deeds of the Bombay mob on the 17th November. The mob acted in the interest of non-co-operation. I announced my intention to stop the mass civil disobedience which was to be immediately started in Bardoli. The humiliation was greater than in 1919. But it did me good. I am sure that the Nation gained by the stopping. India stood for truth and non-violence by the suspension.

But the bitterest humiliation was still to come. Madras did give the warning, but I heeded it not. But, God spoke clearly through Chauri Chaura. I understood that the constables who were so brutally hacked to death had given much provocation. They had even gone back upon the word just given by the Inspector that they would not be molested, but when the procession had passed, the stragglers were interfered with and abused by the constables. The former cried out for help. The mob returned. The constables opened fire. The little ammunition they had was exhausted and they retired to the *thana* for safety. The mob, my informant tells me, thereafter, set fire to the *thana*. The self-imprisoned constables had to come out for dear life and as they did so, they were hacked to pieces and the mangled remains were thrown into the raging flames.

It is claimed that no non-co-operation volunteer had a hand in the brutality and that the mob had not only the immediate provocation but they had also general knowledge of the high-handed tyranny of the police in that



district. No provocation can possibly justify the brutal murder of men who had been rendered defenceless and who had virtually thrown themselves on the mercy of the mob. And when an Indian claims to be non-violent and hopes to mount the throne of liberty through non-violent means, mob-violence even in answer to grave provocation is a bad augury. Suppose the non-violent disobedience of Bardoli was permitted by God to succeed, the Government had abdicated in favour of the victors of Bardoli, who would control the unruly element that must be expected to perpetrate inhumanity upon due provocation? Non-violent attainment of Self-Government presupposes a non-violent control over the violent elements in the country. Non violent non-co-operators can only succeed when they have succeeded in attaining control over the hooligans of India, in other words, when the latter also have learnt patriotically or religiously to refrain from their violent activities, at least whilst the campaign of non-co-operation is going on. The tragedy at Chaura, therefore, roused me thoroughly.

But what about your manifesto to the Viceroy and your rejoinder to his reply? spoke the voice of Satan. It was the bitterest cup of humiliation to drink. Surely it is cowardly to withdraw the next day after pompous threat to the Government and promises to the people of Bardoli. Thus Satan's invitation was to deny Truth and, therefore, Religion, to deny God Himself. I put my doubts and troubles before the Working Committee and other associates whom I found near me. They did not all agree with me at first. Some of them probably do not even now agree with me. But never has a man been blessed, perhaps, with colleagues and associates so considerate and forgiving as I have. They understood my difficulty and patiently followed my argument. The drastic reversal of practically the whole of the aggressive programme may be politically unsound and unwise, but there is no doubt that it is religiously sound, and I venture to assure the doubters that the country will have gained by my humiliation and confession of error.

The only virtue I want to claim is Truth and Non-violence. I lay no claim to superhuman powers. I want none. I wear the same corruptible flesh that the weakest of my fellow-beings wears and am, therefore, as liable to err as any. My services have many limitations, but God has up to now blessed them in spite of the imperfections.

For confession of error is like a broom that sweeps away dirt and leaves the surface cleaner than before. I feel stronger for my confession. And the cause must prosper for the retracing. Never has man reached his destination by persistence in deviation from the straight path.

It has been urged that Chauri Chaura cannot affect Bardoli. There is danger, it is argued, only if Bardoli is weak enough to be swayed by Chauri Chaura and is betrayed into violence. I have no doubt whatsoever on that account. The people of Bardoli are in my opinion the most peaceful in India. But Bardoli is but a speck on the map of India. Its effort cannot succeed unless there is perfect co-operation from the other parts. Bardoli's disobedience will be civil only when the other parts of India remain non-violent. Just as the addition of a grain of arsenic to a pot of milk renders it unfit as food, so will the civility of Bardoli prove unacceptable by the addition of the deadly poison from Chauri Chaura. The latter represents India as much as Bardoli.

Chauri Chaura is after all an aggravated symptom. I have never imagined that there has been no violence—mental or physical—in the places where repression is going on. Only I have believed, I still believe and the pages of *Young India* amply prove that the repression is out of all proportion to the insignificant popular violence in the areas of repression. The determined holding of meetings in prohibited areas I do not call violence. The violence I am referring to is the throwing of brickbats or intimidation and coercion practised in stray cases. As a matter of fact in civil disobedience there should be no excitement. Civil Disobedience is a preparation for mute-

suffering. Its effect is marvellous though unperceived and gentle. But I regarded certain amount of excitement as inevitable, certain amount of unintended violence even pardonable, *i. e.*, I did not consider civil disobedience impossible in somewhat imperfect conditions. Under perfect conditions disobedience when civil is hardly felt. But the present movement is admittedly a dangerous experiment under fairly adverse conditions.

The tragedy of Chauri Chaura is really the index finger. It shows the way India may easily go if drastic precautions be not taken. If we are not to evolve violence out of non-violence, it is quite clear that we must hastily retrace our steps and re-establish an atmosphere of peace, re-arrange our programme and not think of starting mass civil disobedience, until we are sure of peace being started and in spite of Government provocation. We must be sure of unauthorised portions not starting mass civil disobedience.

As it is, the Congress organisation is still imperfect and its instructions are still perfunctorily carried out. We have not established Congress Committees in every one of the villages. Where we have, they are not perfectly amenable to our instructions. We have not probably more than one crore of members on the Roll. We are in the middle of February, yet not many have paid the annual four annas subscription for the current year. Volunteers are indifferently enrolled. They do not conform to all the conditions of their pledge. They do not even wear hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar. All the Hindu volunteers have not yet purged themselves of the sin of untouchability. All are not free from the taint of violence. Not by their imprisonment are we going to win Swaraj or serve the holy cause of the Khilafat or attain the ability to stop payment to faithless servants. Some of us err in spite of ourselves. But some others among us sin wilfully. They join volunteer corps well knowing that they are not and do not intend to remain non-violent. We are thus untruthful even as we hold the Government to be untruthful. We dare not enter the

Kingdom of Liberty with mere lip homage to Truth and Non-violence.

Suspension of mass civil disobedience, and subsidence of excitement, are necessary for further progress, indeed, indispensable to prevent further retrogression. I hope, therefore, that by suspension every Congress man or woman will not only feel disappointed but he or she will feel relieved of the burden of unreality and of national sin.

Let the opponent glory in our humiliation or so called defeat. It is better to be charged with cowardice and weakness than to be guilty of our oath and sin against God. It is million times better to appear untrue before the world than to be untrue to ourselves."

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## CHAPTER XII

### SOME LESSONS

**I**N its first phase the Non-co-operation Movement was active only for about two years. But during that short period the Indian politicians had to work very intensively ; the experience that they accumulated in those two years would not have been available to them under ordinary circumstances in twenty years. It is this which lends this period a special importance in the history of the movement. Out of this experience emerged a number of points whose value in guiding the movement in its later phases cannot be exaggerated. And even at the risk of some repetition, it seems worth while to note them here, before dealing with the second phase of the movement.

The first point, which is often forgotten by the critics of the movement, is that the preliminary stages in the Non-co-operation programme were meant not so much to paralyse the Government as to prepare the people for the final step—the Non-payment of Taxes. The people had, therefore, no right to expect startling results from the preliminary activities. We are not living in the age of miracles. To achieve success time and training were necessary.

Secondly, it should be remembered, that the Non-co-operation Movement was primarily inaugurated to secure the redress of two specific grievances—the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs. It was only later that, at the suggestion of his politically minded friends, Mahatmaji allowed “Swaraj” to be tagged on to the list of grievances drawn up by him. Situated as the people were they could not cut off all connection with the Government at once. The policy of non-co-operation could only be carried out by stages. Even Mahatma Gardhi had now and then to co-operate with the “Satanic” system, and to console his conscience by calling himself a “progressive non-cooperator.”

Thirdly, it was idle to expect that the preliminary steps would produce any substantial effect on the conscience of the bureaucracy. The object of the voluntary suffering by the people could only be to prove to the Government that the force employed by it to coerce them was ineffective. It was too much to expect that such suffering could change the hearts of those who stood against the aspirations of the people. The experience gained during this period bore ample testimony to this fact. It will be readily admitted that the voluntary sacrifices of thousands of persons could greatly help mankind in its rise to a higher level of virtue and truth; but in the field of politics, specially when Indians were after acquiring

something immediately, they should not have expected much from their sufferings. The sufferings of noble souls serve as a leaven to ferment humanity into something noble and glorious, but for immediate and direct appeal self-suffering often produces little or no effect. Those in power yield only, so to speak, at the point of the bayonet; suffering of the down-trodden often makes no impression on their hearts. The foolish world, though it afterwards apotheosized the Christ, had no tears to shed for him when he lay writhing on the Cross. And in these days too one should not expect much from those who glorified the deeds of Dyers and O'Dwyers. Those who could place a man like Gandhi behind the prison walls, and then gloat over the fact, should not be expected to be moved much if the sportive fry wriggled a bit when it was put on coals. Despots, especially when one was fighting against their power and interests, should never be expected to relent of what they think they have to do to protect their own interests.

During the proceedings of the Sankaran Nair-O'Dwyer case, when Frank Johnson was questioned as regards his diabolic treatment of the Indian students, he replied with a savage smack that he would again treat the Indians in the same way as he did during the Martial Law if he were afforded another occasion to do the same. Such an assertion was not strange from a man who believed in the policy of "frightfulness". But the thing

that struck one most strangely was the attitude of the English audience that had gone to listen to the brave and noble soldier's evidence. On his assertion that he would treat the Indian boys again in the same manner as he had done before he was lustily cheered by the whole house mostly packed with ladies and gentlemen of a class that are not ordinarily seen in the British courts. It is a vanity of the human mind enfeebled with pious sentiments to believe that sufferings of the subject people always make a direct appeal to the heart of the rulers. For a depressed nation, no school is better adapted for self-regeneration than that of voluntary self-suffering, but all the value of the training lies in self-purification and the consequent growth of moral and spiritual strength. In the eyes of your opponents your sufferings have seldom a higher value than the abject wriggling of a mean worm in the eyes of a wood-pecker.

It was, therefore, absolutely necessary to keep the Non-co-operation programme quite clean of cobwebs spun by false superstition and weak sentimentalism. It was frankly, though sorrowfully, to be admitted that Non-co-operation as a moral weapon failed to convert the other side; it was only the grosser steps of the programme that yet remained to be tried which could be expected to assure Indians of any success.

Fourthly, Indians were also required to make



their minds quite clear about what they wanted and about what was their goal. By Swaraj Indians did not mean any spiritual or moral regeneration of the people. Such a regeneration was very desirable and every true Indian must try to work to that end as best as one could; but what Indians wanted immediately was political freedom, freedom from foreign domination. Whatever the system of the Government to be evolved afterwards, whatever the social system that might prevail in the end, what the Indians meant by Swaraj was only the attainment of freedom of the country, such freedom as was enjoyed by other civilised nations.

It was true that for the achievement of such freedom certain moral and social reforms were very helpful, but when the principal goal was the attainment of political freedom, such reforms, however desirable and important in themselves, were, for the immediate purpose, to be regarded only as helps; these could, for the time being, occupy only the place of means and not of ends. In the struggle for Swaraj the only aim was the political freedom of the country; when that was attained the nation could attend to other reforms more easily and with greater facilities than was possible under the present Government.

Fifthly, it became all the more necessary to realise the importance of non-violence. Violence, if not harmful, was certainly useless and ineffective. Efforts, therefore, were necessary to keep Indians

non-violent, not only in action but, as far as possible, in speech and thought as well. If at the present stage of racial evolution it was found that only a few could remain non-violent in thought and speech, no efforts should be spared to make every Indian perfectly non-violent at least as regards his actions. Indians, specially the Akalis had shown that such an achievement was not impossible. The fact that one of the most excitable of communities, the community which was supposed to work only on impulse, was, within a few months, trained and disciplined to perfect non-violence, even under grave provocation at Guru-ka-Bagh, showed how high human nature could rise in this respect.

Keeping this as a necessary ideal before their eyes, Indians were not to lose sight of the limitations due to their peculiar circumstances. It was not quite impossible to keep all the three hundred millions of Indians faithfully bound to the vow of non-violence, but if here and there some deplorable cases of stray violence occurred these were to discourage no body in the pursuit of one's lawful object.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### NEW ORIENTATION

**F**OR about five years after Chauri Chaura tragedy, the Non-co-operation Movement remained in abeyance. It was popularly believed that the movement had failed. But it was only by a lax use of the words that one could say that the Non-co-operation had failed. It was true that the Non-co-operators could not achieve the success they had promised the country, but the real fact was that the movement was abandoned long before its full weight was felt and long before the last step in the programme was taken. What failed to force the Government to yield was not the mass civil disobedience, but the preliminary steps, the steps which had their value only as a sort of preparation for reaching the last stage. As mass civil disobedience, and specially non-payment of taxes, was not tried, it was wrong to say that Non-co-operation as such did not succeed. It was not tried anywhere in its really effective form and as long as it was not so tried no one had a right to declare that it had failed. It was not Mahatma Gandhi or his methods that failed, it was the people who failed to make the best use of the weapons that were put in their hands. Non-co-operation certainly had all the potentiality of working

wonders, it could certainly take Indians forward from one step to another till they found themselves in the broad daylight of full freedom, but that was possible only if they could make up their minds to stick to it, and not give up the struggle when owing to a tactical blunder or over-squeamishness on the part of their leaders a halt was ordered at the most inopportune juncture.

The shock Indians received at Bardoli, the unfulfilment of hopes prematurely raised, produced a sort of down-heartedness. The failure of the first attack, rather the orders for retirement just before the attack was to be launched, and the unforeseen cropping up of Hindu-Muslim dissensions, produced a sort of apathy, indifference and hesitation that seemed difficult to shake off. Indians believed that they could win freedom through a civil revolution ; but owing to the demoralisation that crept in after Bardoli resolutions they were not in a mood to indulge in that luxury again without any special pressure. It was due to Hindu-Muslim tension and to the seemingly fruitless result of the agitation; it was also due to a feeling of war-weariness that attacks depressed nations now and then in their struggle for freedom. Whatever the cause, the enthusiasm and earnestness that was so necessary for a peaceful revolution was now lacking in Indian political life and required re-stirring.

It was only near the end of 1926, that one could see signs of a new life again ; stagnancy seemed to

have reached its last limit ; the Indians appeared to have turned the last corner ; it was thought that the time had arrived for the leaders of Indian opinion to come forward again and lead the care-worn people to the path of freedom, happiness, and prosperity.

As was the case in 1920, the Non-co-operators had again to begin anew with the programme for self-preparation ; they had again to show the same diligence, the same patience, the same courage, the same perseverance as marked the initial stages of the movement. Often a boy plucked in an examination had to study almost the same books again ; there is no other way for him to get through the examination. But it did not mean that Indians should follow blindly the route they had chalked out for themselves five years before. Neither the Delhi resolution, nor the one passed at Bardoli, were meant to be sacred books whose text could not be altered. For a progressive Non-co-operator there was no hitch in modifying the programme in the light of the experience gained ; only, if he wanted to work as a Non-co-operator, he could not destroy the spirit of the original programme.

From this point of view, the Non-co-operation programme had to undergo some change. In the new programme the position of honour was again occupied by khadi. Its economic value was admitted on all hands ; its success helped many a poor family who had nothing else to do during a large part of the year. But it was doubted whether Indians could

adopt khadi so universally as to exert by the use of khadi alone sufficiently strong economic pressure to awaken the British from their state of apathy and indifference towards Indians. The question was not so much of the desirability of the use of khadi as that of the possibility of its adoption by Indians on an effectively extensive scale. There are many simple things in the world which adopted on a large scale could change for the better the face of the whole of the earth within a few years, but *tamas* or indolence is so strong in human nature that it is not very easy to persuade mankind to move even for its own good. "If to do were as easy as were to know what were good to do, chapels would become churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces." It is only by miracles that such useful results are brought about. Mahatma Gandhi was the man of miracles; he infused a new vigour in the dead body of Indian politics; whether he could succeed as regards the universal adoption of khadi by Indians was yet in the womb of time.

But supposing that all the Indians agreed to use khadi, it was still regarded as doubtful whether it would lead to political freedom and be effective in moving the British Government to give Swaraj? Very few believed in such a consummation. The use of khadi might hit hard the British merchants, but it were not they alone who governed India. It was true that Indians were ruled in the interests of the British merchants,

but the fact could not be ignored that there existed another class, as stronger as the British merchants, whose interests also demanded that India should be kept perpetually under the British yoke. Apart from the intoxication of power, apart from the instinctive desire to rule a nation for the sake of ruling alone, there was a large and strong class of British officials who for their own selfish ends wanted to keep India in their clutches. Those who said that after the loss of trade to the British the British people would automatically give Swaraj to India, as they could find no interest in ruling such a nation, evidently did not take into consideration many other factors which were also responsible to no small extent for keeping India in bondage.

It was also argued that if one was not satisfied with the economic or political value of the spinning wheel, one could not in any case deny the moral value of the sacred machine. Like the devotion of the Lamas for the prayer wheel, if a great number of Indians devoted half an hour daily to the spinning machine it could create such an overwhelming weight of opinion in favour of the national movement that Government must climb down from its position of arrogant irresponsibility and hand over the administration of the country to the Indians without avoidable delay. Whether such hopes were born of optimistic enthusiasm or of clearer vision not allowed to ordinary human beings, none could be definite about it ; the results were hidden from the eyes of common men.

What the people desired was something tangible, something concrete, to force down the hand of the opponents of Indian freedom. And from that point of view the boycott of foreign cloth and the boycott of British goods in general were found to be more appealing to the public imagination than the mere insistence on the use of khadi. It was believed that it would be the boycott of British goods, specially that of British cloth, that would really hit the British hard, and not merely the insistence on the use or production of khadi.

The boycott of foreign cloth, the boycott of British goods, the boycott of drink, received now more attention at the hands of the national workers than before. In fact these items were considered to be the barometer to judge the Non-co-operator's progress in how far he was able to win the support of the masses. He could not build schools and colleges in a day, but he could certainly check the evil of intoxicants and the use of foreign cloth in a comparatively short time. Peaceful picketing of liquor shops and that of foreign cloth shops could easily be taken in hand in a systematic manner.

There was found a double advantage in this ; not only could Indians grow in purity of character and prosperity of means but they could also be trained and disciplined at the same time for the final contest. Peaceful picketing gave them control over their passions and afforded them opportunities to test their strength to face the



Government. If the bureaucracy did not interfere in their work, so much the better ; if it was considerate enough to interest itself in the picketers the result, it was expected, could be still better ; the jails then could be filled to the bursting point. It was believed that the introduction of mass civil disobedience after such trials was sure to produce the desired result.

The boycott of titles, schools and colleges, and law courts, whether it was suspended or abandoned, mattered little. It had only a moral value ; and though it did immense good in awakening the idea of national self-respect amongst the people little lasting effect was produced on the bureaucracy to move it from its entrenched position. As items for self-preparation and as a means to impress the Government these boycotts seemed to have almost exhausted their value. It was plain that the national struggle for freedom could not be fed on these boycotts for a long time ; they could serve as useful weapons for a short time, and could be re-employed only at the time when the people were prepared to work with the same intensity of feeling as was seen in 1920, and when it was decided to reach the objective at all costs and within a definite period. Though possible for the select few, the agony of such boycotts could not be prolonged for a whole nation for a very long time.

The appeal to the lawyers to give up their profession, to the title-holders to renounce titles, and

to the students to leave schools and colleges was, therefore, to occupy only a minor place in the new programme. In these spheres the Non-co-operator seemed to have reached a stage where the law of diminishing returns had begun to operate ; the results were not in proportion to the efforts spent in that direction. However desirable it might be that the lawyers, students and title-holders should work actively in the cause of Indian freedom, any more expenditure of energy in those directions was found to meet with disappointing results. When they could not come up to the required standard of sacrifice, instead of asking the lawyers and title-holders to give up practice and titles, and the students to leave the educational institutions, they could be asked to serve the country in other ways open to them. The Non-co-operator had formerly ignored, if not actually persecuted, those who were not able to meet his wishes. It was thought that if there were people who, without following all the items, were prepared to help the movement by their position, time, or money, such help should be made use of in as suitable a manner as possible under the existing circumstances.

Similar was the case of the Government servants, both civil and military. They were not prepared to give up service with the Government in large numbers ; but this did not mean that they were not prepared to help the movement in other ways, or that they had no sympathy with it.

The Non-co-operator's attitude toward the Liberals and other political parties also underwent much change. Notwithstanding the most serious exhortations from responsible leaders, these people were often made a target of merciless attack by the Non-co-operators in general. It is true that the attitude of the Liberals towards the Non-co-operators greatly encouraged the Government to put greater obstacles in the way of the national movement than it could have ever dared to do without their help, but the Non-co-operators could have saved much of their time and energy from useless waste by using these sparingly against their own countrymen. In the national struggle every one could play his part, with honour or with dishonour ; it was not for the Non-co-operator to apportion blame or praise one way or the other. Title-holders and traitors, Liberals and Terrorists, however one might dislike their methods, had in their own opinion their own use ; as such they could be left alone to find their own salvation.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SWARAJISTS

**T**HE most controversial change, the one which created almost a split amongst the Non-co-operators, was the one proposed by Mr. C.R. Das and Pandit Moti Lal Nehru as regards the use of the legislatures in the national fight. It was argued that after the failure at Bardoli pressure should be brought to bear on the Government by the use of obstructive tactics in the legislatures as was done by the Irish Home Rulers in England. The party which advocated this view was named the Swarajist party; it had a large following amongst those whose chief sphere of work so far had been in the legislatures. In the country at large the party had not much following. Whatever influence the party possessed was due to its association with the Congress. Mahatma Gandhi and the orthodox Non-co-operators, who were called "No-changers," first opposed the movement, but later on Mahatmaji changed his mind and agreed to give the Swarajists every support not inconsistent with his principles.

The Swarajists believed that the Government could be compelled to yield to public opinion simply by the use of moral pressure. But they were soon disillusioned. They had in the end to go back

to the programme which aimed at self-preparation leading, when necessary, to civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes. Their fruitless successes in Bengal, the Central Provinces, and the Legislative Assembly finally convinced the Swarajists that such spectacular tactics could not shake the bureaucracy from its position of power and profit. In fact some of the Swarajists soon after their entry into the legislatures began to talk of civil disobedience with enthusiasm and impatience, though the Government well understood that the Swarajists were nothing but Liberals at heart and their talk of civil disobedience was only a hollow threat. It was for this reason that the British played with the Swarajists as a cat plays with a mouse ; sometimes the Swarajists were flattered and given some freedom in action, but when they presumed too much on their powers they were given a slap on the face and silenced.

Though the Swarajists could not win freedom for India, they were successful in destroying the charm that had been woven round the Montagu Reforms by the bureaucracy. But their success in the legislatures fell far short of what was achieved by Mahatmaj's programme of moral pressure. There was a time when Lord Reading begged Mahatmaji for a Round Table Conference, but later when the Swarajists even humbly prayed for it their appeals went in vain.

The only gain which the Swarajists could secure

was that they were successful in pushing some of the Liberals out of the fold of the Government. The Government could no longer claim to rule the country with the help of the elected representatives of the people as it did when the Liberal politicians alone were in the legislatures. Such a gain could be considered of some value, but that value was almost insignificant. When Swaraj was to be obtained by the sweat of our own brows it mattered little what the Government said about the support it received or did not receive from the people. When the legislatures were almost totally boycotted by the Indian voters, and those who occupied them had no following in the country, the Government still claimed to rule the country with the help of the Indian representatives. And later when the Swarajists entered the legislatures and knocked the bottom out of that claim, the Government came forward with other similar pleas to support its position. The officials then took up the slogan that the voters did not know the value of their votes and had returned worthless demagogues to the legislatures, that the best interests of the country were in the custody of the officials who alone represented the dumb masses who had no votes and who formed the real backbone of the country, and that the voters formed only an insignificant minority in the great mass of Indian population and as such could not be relied upon for safe guidance in the administration of the country.

It should not be understood that the Swarajists were in any way guilty of supporting the Government when they ought not to have done so or that like the Liberals they helped in any way in the prolongation of India's political subjection. They were in fact as good Non-co-operators as any one else could claim to be ; only their non-co-operation was conceived a bit differently from that of Mahatmaji. It was impossible for Mahatmaji to go to the legislatures and there take the oath of allegiance to serve loyally the King and his Government and then to put unreasonable obstruction in its way and try to subvert it. But such compunction did not trouble the Swarajists.

To occupy the legislatures in order to wreck them by the use of obstructive tactics or to keep them empty by remaining outside when elected, did not go against the spirit of non-co-operation as it was understood by the general public. It was, therefore, not the proposal which was objected to by the No-changers but the mentality that lay behind it. The proposal was put up as an alternative to mass civil disobedience ; it meant that the Government would bow down before the nationalists when they had secured a majority of votes in the different electorates. Influenced by the spirit of European constitutional history, the followers of Mr. Das believed that government by veto was an impossibility. Such notions had some value in countries where Governments were run on responsible and constitutional lines, but not in

India where Government was autocratic and irresponsible. When it cared not for the opinion of the voters outside the legislatures, what respect could the representatives of the voters expect from it inside the legislatures? The bureaucracy was not prepared to give the Indians Swaraj at once or in the near future; it was for the Indians to force it out of its hands; and the legislatures constituted after the Montagu Reforms were not fit weapons for the purpose. Swaraj was to be won by the people outside the legislatures and not by those inside. With the example of Ireland and South Africa before them, where liberty was won by the work of the people outside the legislatures, the Indians could not afford to allow their best men to waste their time and efforts in that direction. By wrecking the Reforms one could be afforded the opportunity for some fun and mischievous glee at the expense of the Government but the value of such tactics could not be more than that of the burning of a few drink shops by street urchins misguided by the zeal for temperance reform.

There were people at the special session of the Congress at Calcutta who believed in the potency of the machinery of the legislatures to win Swaraj. Under Mahatmaji's influence, and because Swaraj was promised in one year, they gave way and had made common cause with those who were for the boycott of the legislatures. Mahatmaji's incarceration and the Non-co-operator's failure to get



Swaraj in the stipulated time, gave the party a new life. Messrs. Das, Nehru, Ajmal Khan and others of the same mind had lost faith in themselves and the people; consequently these leaders went back to their old position and laid the foundations of the Swaraj party; they resolved to enter the legislatures with a view to obtaining Swaraj by the use of sharp tongues and empty hands, by out-arguing and out-voting the government.

As already stated, for some time there was a tension of feelings between the Swarajists and the No-changers ; but at the Cawnpore session of the Congress, in the year 1925, the Swaraj Party was recognised as the Congress Party in the legislatures. The attitude of the orthodox Non-co-operator seemed to be that the Moderates had tried the legislatures and got India freedom in the shape of putting fifty thousand of her patriotic sons in jail ; now if the Swarajists wanted to try their hand at the same game, let them have that satisfaction.

It must be admitted that the No-changers' supineness was also largely responsible for the going back of the Swarajists to the legislatures. The No-changer worked the Congress programme in an extremely sluggish manner and did not try to modify it or make it aggressive and lively. Responsibility for the temporary secession of the Swarajists lay mainly with those who were not prepared to take up civil disobedience when the country wanted it and who allowed the programme

to remain cold and soul-less without trying to modify it.

If the Swarajists could do no special good to the Indian cause, they did no harm either. If anybody's conscience was elastic enough and he could gulp down the oath of allegiance without compunction, he was welcome to go to the legislative bodies and curse the Government to his hearts' content for its wrongs to the people. Those who desired to spend their impotent rage on the Government from the safe and comfortable seats in the legislative chambers, had every right to do so. Those who believed in the efficacy of moral pressure and who, for some reason or other, were not prepared to work outside the legislatures, had nothing else to do but let off gas now and then in that safe atmosphere.

The position of such persons was like that of a weakling of Delhi who had an argument with a sturdy Punjabi hailing from the North. The Punjabi gave the Delhi fellow a good beating, but the Delhi man was obstinate; though he could not return the Panjabi's blows he had a sharp tongue; even when lying on the ground he did not cease hurling filthy abuse against his adversary. When the quarrel was over, people came forward and expressed their sympathy with the Delhi **man** on the beating he had received. "Oh, no," replied the Delhi stalwart, "My body is bleeding, but I have pierced the Panjabi's heart with my tongue; he

must smart for ever under its lacerating edge." Though the Swarajists were kicked every day in the legislatures, they had the satisfaction of abusing the Treasury Benches to their heart's content.

The real danger of the Swarajist position was the contact of the party with officials ; it proved too much for some of them. In fact some of the Swarajists were later on found as eager to accept office as any Liberal ; many others were repentant of allying themselves with the party of systematic and continuous obstruction ; and in certain other cases the party as a whole was found obliged to give up totally the idea of continuous obstruction.

This could not go on for a long time. When the Congress again regained its hold on the masses, the Swarajists were obliged to recast their programme and work more consistently with their professions. The alternative left to them was that either they should leave the legislatures and work in the country or leave the Congress and work their salvation free from Congress bondage like the Liberals, Terrorists, and Loyalists, the parties representing not the masses but the select few. It was fortunate for all concerned that when the critical time came, almost all the Swarajists were found on the side of the Congress.

The alliance between Mahatma Gandhi's followers and the Swarajists was very desirable. Both the parties believed in non-violent revolutionary methods, and, therefore, could help each other

to a degree that was not possible in the case of other political parties. There were certain fundamental differences between the view-points of Mahatmaji and that of the Swarajists, but the general public which had no desire to enter into fine distinctions could not for long tolerate any such division. At the Cawnpore Congress, both the parties promised to help each other without any reservations, and the people promised to support them as best as they could in their respective spheres.

It was tacitly agreed that the alliance should not prove a drag on any of the parties; the politician and the religious enthusiast should not demand of each other what could not be given without compromising one's principles. Mahatmaji agreed to act as a guide, philosopher, and friend of the Swarajists, and the Swarajist leaders promised through the late Pandit Moti Lal Nehru to support the No-changers to the best of their ability. Each party could follow its own inclinations and its own conscience ; no responsibility was to rest on one party for the actions of the other.

In order to keep the Swarajists in good humour and also that they might not fall back again in Mahatmaji's trap, the Government now and then offered them certain concessions and tried to keep them in suspense by proposing the formation of enquiry committees and commissions. On account of the world situation, specially on account of the danger

from Bolsheviks and the Germans, and the expected victory of the Labour Party in England at the general election, the Conservative Government tried in 1928, to win over Indian opinion to the side of British capitalism by throwing a seemingly substantial sop to the Swarajists. It appointed a commission under Sir John Simon to report about the working of the Montague Reforms. This was done not because of any pressure from the Swarajists but because of the fear of the growing strength of Mahatmaji outside the legislatures. The British capitalist thought that if Gandhiji's movement was allowed to come into power again, there was every danger of Indians allying themselves with anti-capitalistic and anti-British movements in Europe and Asia. The best they could do under the circumstances was to win over the Indian Swarajists and with them, if possible, the Non-co-operators.

To the bitter disappointment of everybody the Simon Commission proved a hoax. No Indian was appointed on it, and its terms of reference were far from satisfactory. The Commission was boycotted by leading Indians of almost all schools of thought, and its report was interred later on in the shifting sands of the Round Table Conference.

After the appointment of the Simon Commission, it did not take long for the Swarajists to see the futility of their efforts in the Assembly.

Notwithstanding a victory here and a victory there, which they now and then scored over the Government, and notwithstanding the beautiful fire-works with which Mr. Patel, the Swarajist President of the Assembly, entertained the country, the Swarajists could not overcome the ennui of the fruitless task they had to perform in that august body. It is true that the Swarajists resigned from the legislatures only after the Congress had passed the boycott resolution in Lahore ; but it is well known that some of the most prominent amongst them, specially the late Paudit Moti Lal Nehru, who was joint-founder and leader of the Swaraj Party with Mr. C. R. Das, had strongly advocated that course much earlier.

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## CHAPTER XV

### PARALLEL GOVERNMENT

**W**HATEVER the intrinsic value of the different items of the constructive programme, their chief utility in the movement for attaining national freedom lay in their organising the people for the achievement of a common ideal. The constructive programme was considered to be effective in making the people united and self-reliant ; hence its importance. Whatever the value of the Khadi and of Hindu-Muslim Unity in themselves, as parts of the national programme they were important because they aimed at national solidarity. The importance of Khadi and Hindu-Muslim unity was not thus difficult to realise, but when one considered them from the point of view of the movement for national freedom, these items were only means to an end. From a certain point of view, the constructive programme could be an end in itself ; but from the point of view of political freedom of the country it could only be considered as a means to a certain end, that end being self-organisation and self-independence.

To clarify the issue it was found absolutely necessary that as much stress should be laid on the indirect means as on the direct end itself. The Khadi

and Hindu-Muslim unity could not take Indians very far on the road to Swaraj unless the Congress was so organised as to become a really effective institution representing all what was best in the nation. The object of the new move was to organise the people separately and independently of the Government and enable them to stand on their own legs without any help from the Government or official institutions. In short, the Congress was to be made a sort of a National Government parallel to the one established by foreign bureaucrats. If this parallel government were successful it would furnish unmistakable evidence of the capacity of Indians to achieve Swaraj. It was argued that Indians should accept the challenge and prove their fitness for Swaraj by establishing a parallel government running side by side to the foreign one. When Indians were thus organised, whether the Government wished it or not, it would be compelled to hand over all powers to them without further pressure. The movement for self-organisation was meant to remove internal weakness and to teach the people self-discipline and self-reliance. Once they learned to stand on their own legs and gained self-confidence there would be an end to foreign domination.

With this end in view it was found absolutely necessary that the Congress organisation should be made as perfect as possible. It was suggested that not only should Congress re-establish its



own courts and volunteer corps, it should also have a well established system of voluntary taxes to support its administrative work. A whole-time president like Mahatma Gandhi, with a Working Committee of paid or honorary officials serving as the cabinet, and with the All-India Congress Committee controlling the Working Committee like the British parliament does the cabinet, would provide the country with an efficient parallel governmental organisation which could serve India as the Dail did Ireland.

It was possible for a Mahatma to feel that the country was advancing towards Swaraj with the revolutions of the *Charkha*, but most of the Indians had not acquired such sensibilities with which Mahatmaji was blessed. On the other hand every Indian who helped in the formation of a volunteer corps, who helped in the establishment of a Congress Panchayat, who helped in the political education of the people, who helped in raising funds for the Congress, or who otherwise helped in the work of the National Parliament, could vividly feel that he was helping, rather actually establishing, the National Government in the country. He was not advancing toward Swaraj, he was rather realising it every moment of his life. Each step he took, he did so not on the road to Swaraj, but in the precincts of Swaraj itself.

There was nothing new in this idea of the parallel government; it had been before the country in

some form or other for the last ten years; Congress workers had often discussed the proposal and tried to give practical shape to it. In fact the establishment of the Working Committee, the new constitution of the All-India Congress Committee perfected at Nagpur, the organisation of the Seva Dal, had all their birth in this idea. It was only during the debacle that followed the Bardoli retirement order that the idea was thrown in the background and attention diverted to relatively less important measures.

In a few words the new programme before the country was not as much of Non-co-operation exerting moral pressure on the Government to yield to the demand of the public as that of a civil or peaceful revolution on one side establishing an independent and parallel government of the people and on the other side peacefully elbowing out the existing system of irresponsible government out of the country.

To carry out the scheme to a successful end it was proposed that every village should again reorganise its Congress Committee, its Panchayat and its corps of volunteers. The work of the Panchayat was not only to be the settlement of petty disputes but also the civil administration of the locality. A Congress Committee was to consist of those who wanted to establish Swaraj in India through peaceful means; the Panchayats were to do the work of general administration

and the volunteer corps were to serve as the police. Thus each village was to become a unit of the new National Government. By successive steps villages were to be united to form sub-divisional and district Panchayats ; these latter were to take up the administration of the sub-divisions and districts in their hands. The Provincial Congress Committees with their Executive and Working Committees were to assume the position of the Provincial Governments. From this there was only one step forward to make the All-India Congress Committee the National Parliament. The new institution was of course to work on a voluntary basis and without the use of force.

For the work of organisation an abundant supply of men and money was needed. The Congress required permanent workers and a large fund to complete the organisation. Apart from the fixed sum which every Congressman paid as subscription, it was proposed that a national tax should be levied on every sympathiser. Those who wanted Swaraj were asked to pay a decent percentage of their earnings to the Congress.

Proposals were also made to establish a National Service under the Congress. Permanent officials of the Congress, both honorary and stipendiary, were proposed to be enlisted in the new service. It was suggested that it should be they who should be made responsible for the organisation of the Committees and Panchayats.

The Bardoli programme was criticised on the ground that it created no enthusiasm in the mind of the masses. The proposals described above were expected to meet such criticism. It was believed that when Independence was declared as the national goal and the new programme was put before the country in a presentable form, it would certainly help in creating an enthusiastic response in the mind of the public. The very idea of the establishment of a National Government was considered enough to electrify the atrophied muscles that controlled mass action.

So far the movement had been mainly in the hands of the middle class people mostly living in the towns. For preliminary stages this was natural. But when the movement had to be carried to its natural end, it was necessary that the peasants and the labourers, forming 80 per cent of the Indian population, should be directly brought into touch with it. Indian politicians had not so far paid adequate attention to the peasants and workers. Mahatma Gandhi was the first Indian leader to realise the importance of work amongst the rural masses ; his itinerary in rural India by far surpassed the record of all previous Indian leaders in that respect ; his work in the Bardoli Tualka alone was a miracle in the annals of self-preparation and self-sacrifice. Educated classes could go only to a certain distance with Mahatma Gandhi. For an agitation that aimed at moral and mental pressure no class was

better suited to do the work than the educated classes ; but when the aim was a revolution, even though it was to be a peaceful one , it was only the humbler classes, the classes that felt most the burden of a vicious system, that could be expected to put their shoulder to the wheel.

The Swaraj movement had not gone deep in the heart of the peasants and the labouring classes. So far it had been a sort of a bourgeoisie movement; at least the leadership was in the hands of the upper middle class. These people could make sacrifices only to a limited extent. A revolutionary movement, to be successful, required to be carried on pre-eminently amongst the peasants and the labourers ; Swaraj could be won only through them, as they alone could make the requisite sacrifices on a scale large enough to compel the bureaucracy to change its mind and yield to the demand of the people.

The Congress had somehow felt shy of the labouring classes. It was proposed that the Labour Unions should be taken under the direct control of the Congress, and Congress workers should be allowed to actively participate in labour politics. So far Labour Unions were often found in the hands of men who did not command as much respect as such persons ought to. It was thought that when the Congress took up this work, Indian labourers could prove as useful in throwing away the reactionary system as labour had done in other countries.

At the same time it was thought that it would be immoral to use the poor ignorant labourers as mere pawns on the political chess-board. It was seen more than once that labour strikes did not produce the same results in India as in some other countries. When such strikes were declared it was the public and the labourer who suffered ; the bureaucracy was not much moved because it was seldom touched by these strikes and it had public funds to fall back upon to make good its own losses. So the Congress leaders, though anxious to make labour organisation an effective wing of the Congress, were to be very cautious in dealing with indiscriminate strikes.

It was also suggested that the Congress should organise the boycott of British goods and firms, establish agencies and relations outside India for securing help from other nations, and repudiate responsibility for the national debt. The boycott of British goods and firms, it was objected would lead to more bitterness than substantial results. There were British articles which Indians were not able to boycott for many years to come without putting themselves to inconvenience quite out of proportion to any political gain that might be reasonably expected to result from such a boycott. Similar was the case as regards the boycott of British firms. In a majority of cases these were used by those who must use them. As far as one could judge, except cloth, there were no other articles whose

boycott could produce any immediate political or economic pressure on the British.

The establishment of agencies and relations outside India for foreign propaganda was also taken in hand, but not in right earnest. The Non-co-operator could not ignore the effect of foreign opinion on Indian politics ; but it was argued that help from that source could be only nominal, and that the battles of India were to be fought and won on Indian fields and by Indians alone.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE

THE most important change on the constructive side of the programme was the declaration of Independence as the goal of the Indian National Congress. It was at the Madras session of the Congress, in 1927, that the independence resolution was first passed. Maulana Hasrat Mohani had been pressing the resolution since 1920 ; but, on account of Mahatmaji's weight against the proposal, the resolution never before went beyond the committee stage.

Mahatmaji was not present in Madras ; the resolution this time was sponsored by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, and passed by the Congress almost unanimously. This gave the Non-co-operation Movement quite a new orientation. It showed that the movement had totally passed out of the hands of the older generation. The Calcutta and Nagpur resolutions bore on their very face the mark of a compromising spirit between the old and the new ; but the Madras resolution cut all old connections and set the Non-co-operator's face in almost a new direction. Henceforth the Non-co-operator viewed the National movement not as a movement for the redress of specific grievances and the introduction of political reforms,



but for the establishment of a government by the people, for the people and of the people.

In order to pacify the Swarajists and win over the Moderates the Government appointed the Muddiman Committee in 1924, and the Skeen Committee in 1925. The object of the first was to see how far the Montague Reforms could be advanced without going to Parliament for a new Act, and of the second to find out how Indians could be introduced in good numbers into the higher grades of the Indian Army. Both the Committees were boycotted by the Congress. The report of the Muddiman Committee was of the usual halting type; but the Skeen Committee made some recommendations which were regarded as distinctly liberal. The Government ignored both the reports and did not, however, move an inch from its previous position.

Meanwhile agitation in the country was gaining strength. Hindus and Muslims had gained some experience and found that quarrels and riots did not pay in the long run. Leading men from both sides tried to come to grips with outstanding differences. An agreement was arrived at in 1928, in the Congress session at Madras, that went a great length towards satisfying even the communal ambitions of the various Indian communities. A further attempt to reconcile political and communal differences that existed amongst various Indian communities and parties was made by constituting an All Parties Committee to put forward

Indian political demand with as much unanimity as possible.

The Madras Congress session also passed the following resolution :—

The proceedings and success of the Congress session at Madras set the Government puriously to think. It promptly appointed the Simon Commission to report about the future constitution of India. As already stated, the Conservative Government in England felt shaky about its position ; with the concurrence of the Government of India it hurried with its proposals to review the Montagu Reforms. The idea was that if the question was allowed to drift for some time more, and the Labour Government came into power, there was a possibility of the new Government treating the Indian question in a more liberal spirit than the Conservatives and their hirelings in India.

Unfortunately for them the move proved wholly abortive. In a fit of supercilious contempt for Indian feelings, no place was given on the Commission even to the Indian Moderates. The result was that the Commission was totally boycotted by almost every Indian holding any responsible position in the public eye. Later, the Government tried to make amends in the shape of partially associating Indian Committees with the Commission, but nobody was taken in, and leading politicians, whether Hindus or Muslims, refused to have anything to do with that unwelcome body.

The Labour Government came into office in 1929. It had already accorded its support to the formation of the Simon Commission by deputing two of its representatives to work on it. But the Labour leaders soon realised that the Commission was hopelessly unpopular; still they had not the courage to brush aside the cobwebs they had inherited from their predecessors. The only course they thought advisable to adopt was to call a Round Table Conference of Indian and British statesmen to finally unravel the tangle in which Indian politics had been thrown by the reactionaries.

Mahatma Gandhi had by this time come again into the Congress arena. At Calcutta he wholeheartedly supported Pt. Moti Lal Nehru in fighting against those who advocated the pushing forward of the resolution of Complete Independence. He persuaded the Congress to agree to accept Dominion Status if it were offered within one year. The following resolution was passed to give effect to this proposal:—

“This Congress, having considered the Constitution recommended by the All Parties Committee Report, welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India’s political and communal problems and congratulates the Committee on the virtual unanimity of its recommendations and, whilst adhering to the resolution relating to complete independence passed at the Madras Congress, approves of the constitution drawn up by the Committee as a great step in political advance, specially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country.

"Subject to the exigencies of the political situation, this Congress will adopt the constitution if it is accepted in its entirety by the British Parliament on or before the 31st December, 1929; but in the event of its non-acceptance by that date or its earlier rejection, the Congress will organise a campaign of non-violent non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon.

"Consistently with the above, nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the carrying on, in the name of the Congress, of the propaganda for complete independence."

The year passed out but no signs of Dominion Status falling from the British heavens were visible. At the fag end of the year, an announcement was made by the Viceroy to hold a Round Table Conference in England. This was done just before the Congress session at Lahore, evidently to favourably influence its decisions.

The Congress leaders immediately called a meeting in Delhi inviting also the representatives of other political parties to discuss the Viceroy's announcement. Those of them who attended the meeting agreed to take part in the proposed Round Table Conference provided the conditions mentioned in the following statement were fulfilled:—

"We the undersigned, have read with careful consideration the Viceregal pronouncement on the question of India's future status among the nations of the world. We appreciate the sincerity underlying the declaration, as also the desire of the British Government to placate Indian opinion. We hope to be able to tender our co-operation to His Majesty's Government in their effort to evolve a scheme of Dominion constitution—a

constitution suitable for India's needs. But we deem it necessary that certain acts should be done, certain points should be cleared so as to inspire trust and ensure co-operation of the principal political organisations of the country. We consider it vital for the success of the proposed conference that,

- (a) a policy of general conciliation should be definitely adopted to induce a calm atmosphere ;
- (b) political prisoners should be granted a general amnesty, and,
- (c) the representation of progressive political organisations should be effectively secured and that the Indian National Congress as the largest among them should have predominant representation.

" Some doubt has been expressed about the interpretation of the paragraph in the statement made by the Viceroy on behalf of His Majesty's Government regarding Dominion Status. We understand, however, that the conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established but to frame a scheme of Dominion constitution for India. We hope that we are not mistaken in thus interpreting the import and implications of the weighty pronouncement of His Excellency the Viceroy.

" Until the new constitution comes into existence, we think it necessary that a more liberal spirit should be infused in the Government of the country, that the relations between the executive and the legislature should be brought more in harmony with the object of the proposed conference and that greater regard should be paid to constitutional methods and practices. We hold it to be absolutely essential that the public should be made to feel that a new era has commenced even from to-day and that the new constitution is to be but a register of that fact.

" Lastly, we deem it as an essential factor for the success of the conference that it should be convened as expeditiously as possible."

Government was mum. It made no declaration to clarify the situation. Its object obviously was to silence the agitation against the Simon Commission and generally to smooth things over. But the Congress knew how things really stood. And there were Englishmen—both in England and in this country—who blurted out the truth that the Round Table Conference was to be nothing but a fake.

Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Moti Lal Nehru thought it desirable to see the Viceroy before going to Lahore to finally commit the nation to the position for which it had been hankering since 1857. Lord Irwin would not commit himself even to Dominion Status ; all talk about the equality of Indian status in the British Empire was found to be moonshine. It was quite natural : how could Indians claim equality of status in the brotherhood of an Empire, or a Commonwealth, that was pre-eminently British in its racial composition ?

Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Moti Lal reached the Lahore Congress greatly disappointed ; no hope of an Indian and British union, for which men like Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Gokhale, Surendranath Banerjee, Hume, Wedderburn, and a host of others had tried and worked, was possible. According to Lord Irwin Indians could remain in the British Empire only as a subject nation, the British Parliament was to be the final authority in all that concerned this country; they could live and have their being only on the sufferance of that august body.

Mahatmaji was compelled by circumstances to declare that Independence was not only to be the goal of the Indian Nation but it was also the creed of the Congress for which it must work immediately and whole-heartedly. At midnight of December 31, 1929, and in the early hours of the morning of 1st January, 1930, the flag of Independence was unfurled on the banks of the river Ravi. It was at the banks of this very river that the Rishis of old first chanted hymns from the Vedas ; it was here that Farid first recited the Quran to Indian audiences and Nanak revealed the Granth. It was by a strange coincidence that the resolve to establish Indian Independence should have been made in the Province which was the last to come under British domination.

The Congress resolution that declared Indian Independence as the creed of the Congress ran as follows :—

" This Congress endorses the action of the Working Committee in connection with the manifesto signed by party leaders, including Congressmen, on the Viceregal pronouncement of October 31 relating to Dominion Status and appreciates the efforts of the Viceroy towards a settlement of the National movement for Swaraj. The Congress, however, having considered all that has since happened, and the result of the meeting between Mahatma Gandbi, Pandit Motilal Nehru and other leaders and the Viceroy, is of opinion that nothing is to be gained in the circumstances by the Congress being represented at the proposed Round Table Conference. This Congress, therefore, in pursuance of the resolution passed at its

session at Calcutta last year, declares that the word 'Swaraj' in article one of the Congress constitution shall mean complete independence, and further declares the entire scheme of the Nehru Committee's Report to have lapsed, and hopes that all Congressmen will henceforth devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of complete independence for India. As a preliminary step towards organising a campaign for Independence, and in order to make the Congress policy as consistent as possible with the change of creed, this Congress resolves upon a complete boycott of the central and provincial legislatures and committees constituted by Government and call upon Congressmen and others taking part in the national movement to abstain from participating directly or indirectly in future elections, and directs the present Congress members of the legislatures and committees to resign their seats. This Congress appeals to the nation zealously to prosecute the constructive programme of the Congress, and authorises the All India Congress Committee, whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary."

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## CHAPTER XVII

### WITHIN OR WITHOUT THE BRITISH EMPIRE

THE Lahore resolution on "Independence" came as a shock to many an Indian politician of the old school of thought and created lot of trouble. The main reason for the trouble was due to the fact that whenever the question was discussed, points were introduced not relevant to the proposition. Instead of considering whether it was of advantage or disadvantage to India to remain within the Empire, most of those who discussed the question were carried away by sentiments generated by current politics. The question ought to have been discussed from the point of view of a man who balanced advantages and disadvantages of the relation between India and the British Empire to both the parties and then tried to come to a correct decision ; current politics, if touched at all, should have been touched only by the way. It was also necessary to assume for purposes of the discussion that Indians had got Swaraj and were free to make their own choice about their relations with other countries ; fear or hatred of the British should not have entered the discussion at all. But this was seldom done and hence the

trouble. As the question has recently assumed great importance, before proceeding further, we would like to discuss it briefly from this point of view.

### 1. THE STATUS OF INDIANS IN THE BRITISH COLONIES

The first thing that should influence Indian opinion in connection with the relationship of India with the British Empire should be the attitude of the various parts of the Empire towards India. Before deciding their fate, Indians ought to know whether the Empire was going to treat them on a footing of equality. Free India shall never consent to a pact which relegated her sons to the position of mere "hewers of wood and drawers of water". Whatever other advantages there may be in the privilege of being a member of such an Empire, if Indians were to be regarded as outcastes and untouchables, they shall never consent to remain within it. The sooner they declined the membership of such a fraternity the better.

The un-naturalness of such a tie is obvious, and one need not try to say much on the point. One, therefore, needs simply to review the position of Indians in the different parts of the Empire to show that they found there no welcome on equal terms, and that it would be a disgrace for them to link themselves permanently in a partnership in which their association on respectable terms was not desired.

**Canada.** The doors of Canada were shut against Indians long ago. Restrictions placed against them culminated in the Komagata Maru tragedy, when about five hundred Indians were turned back from the American shores as if they were suffering from some infectious disease. After that incident, Indians have not cared to go to that part of the Empire in any large numbers. The failure of the Guru Nanak Steamship Company dramatically brought home to the Indians their helplessness in the matter ; no self-respecting Indian has again dared to turn his face to Canada.

**South Africa.** In South Africa new emigrants from India are not allowed to settle ; even those who took such a prominent part in civilising the dark continent, who were in fact the pioneer settlers, are daily put under rigorous disabilities. The aim of the white settlers there is to clear South Africa of all Indians ; for this purpose they have framed laws to make that place a veritable hell for Indians. Notwithstanding the undertakings given by Union statesmen from time to time every day new restrictions are placed against Indians ; they are denied even the ordinary rights of citizenship. Socially they are regarded as outcastes and politically they are pariahs. The result is that the only course left open to Indians in that country is to leave the Colony and come back to their own homes or to die in their struggle to establish their right to remain in that country as equal citizens.

Call it re-emigration or repatriation, try to white-wash the ugly fact by this or that pact, it is as clear as day-light that Indians are no more wanted in South Africa.

**Australia.** Even more hard are the restrictions placed against Indians in Australia. The Japanese and the Chinese have almost a free entry into that land, but Indians are treated as lepers ; under clever and dishonest regulations the doors of the new continent are permanently shut against them, and they have no remedy.

**Kenya.** In Kenya where the number of Indian settlers is more than that of the Europeans, and where the part played by Indians in making the Colony a fit place for habitation was of far greater importance than that of the Europeans, Indians are being pushed out from their position every day. It is a Crown Colony, and the powers of the Home Government in its administration are supreme. But Indians get little practical support from that quarter. Under such circumstances it is very doubtful if Indians can remain there honourably for a very long time.

In short in every part of the Empire where Indians have gone to settle, they have been treated as worse than aliens ; aliens have rights but Indians have none. In the circumstances to ask Indians to remain within the Empire was to add insult to injury. It is not for Indians to decide but for the other members of the Empire to make up their

mind whether they are willing to extend equal rights to them or not. When the British colonies deny to Indians even the elementary rights of citizenship, what right has any body to ask Indians to remain in such a degrading society? It is difficult to understand how some Indian politicians can still sing the praises of the Empire. Do they like it because in Canada, Kenya, and South Africa, Indians are treated like helots? No self-respecting Indian can have any regard for an Empire in which he is denied the primary rights of citizenship. Perhaps it may be a case of a slave loving his chains. In any case it is nothing but political Masochism of the worst type.

## 2. THE COLOUR QUESTION

The reasons for the present attitude of the Colonies towards Indians are not difficult to seek. Whatever Christian platitudes may be uttered from the pulpit and the platform, it is a fact that Europeans as a class, and specially the colonials, are infected with a virulent form of colour prejudice.

From the study of what has recently been written in the West on the colour question, it is clear that colour prejudice is very strong amongst the colonials in the British Empire. It is not only the opinion of stray publicists; others who have widely travelled in different parts of the British Empire and have studied the Empire problems, testify to the acute position which the colour question has assumed.

A friend who came back recently from one of these Colonies told the author a good story to illustrate the point. At a dinner party one friend sat gloomily on the table and took little part in the conversation that was going on. The others present noticed the peculiarity and asked the reason. After some hesitation he replied, "I have lost all appetite; while coming here I saw a pair of opposite colours, an Indian and a white girl, walking together arm in arm."

It was a stray incident, but it clearly showed which way the wind blew. With colour prejudice running so high in the Colonies, it is futile to talk of equality in the British Empire; and then where there is no equality all union is sure to prove disastrous to Indians, if not to both the parties.

It was said that colour prejudice would die a natural death ere long. That day would be welcome, and Indians would be found ready to revise their attitude when it dawns; but as long as the colonials were infected with the present virus, and treated Indians as they do to-day, it will be very foolish on the part of Indians to adopt any other course than to steer clear of all such connections. For their own self-respect, and in order to cure the colonials of their colour prejudice, it is absolutely necessary that Indians should go out of the Empire; not only because Indians did not want to remain in the Empire but also because the Empire did not want them to remain within its boundaries as respectable men.

To be clear, Indians are not satisfied with the treatment which they receive in the colonies ; it rests with the colonies to win their hearts back, and prove to them that they are wrong. It is now for the colonies to prove not only that they do not want to push Indians out of the sacred fold, but that they are really anxious for partnership with them.

### 3. OLD ASSOCIATIONS

There is yet another consideration which might prompt India to sever her connection with the British Empire. Just before the War, India was officially regarded as a dependency ; to-day she is not called a dependency, but is called an equal member of the Empire. It is, however, not difficult to see that the change in nomenclature is only superficial ; it is only in the official parlance that India is now and then so flattered ; in his heart of hearts almost every Britisher living at home or in the Colonies, regards India still a dependency ; and he will continue to do so as long as India has any special connection with the British Empire. It is nature's own law that one who has once been a slave is always a slave in the eyes of those who once lorded it over him. India, whatever progress she may make in her status, will always be looked down upon as an inferior member of the Empire ; she will always be treated with airs of patronage. However much the two parties might

try, the fatal influence of the old associations must always tell against India. That such a spirit of superiority on one side and inferiority on the other be completely eliminated, it is of the utmost importance that there should be complete readjustment of all old connections.

It cannot be denied that some far-sighted statesmen in England are anxious that all idea of Indian inferiority should be removed from the minds of the British people, but their number is very small ; their efforts in the present circumstances cannot prove very fruitful. A nation that once has occupied a subordinate position is always looked down upon by the ruling race. The most that British people can do for the Indians is to treat them with an air of benevolent patronage ; the idea of absolute equality is almost impossible. It is only when the governed nation has successfully won its own freedom, not by charitable concessions, but by its own exertions that it can expect others to show respect to its feelings. A slave is always regarded a slave by his master however kind and indulgent he might have been in making him his own equal. A slave who really wants to be free and who wants to be regarded as really equal of his master, must win his own freedom and must stand independently on his own legs. Indians have worked in an inferior position for a pretty long time ; and if they now want real equality, serious break with the past is necessary. There is no other way to destroy the



inferiority complex on one side and airs of superiority on the other. When once free they shall be at liberty to ally themselves with any one whom they liked, England not excepted. But that connection will be honourable and voluntary for both the parties. That these ideas have force is evident from the fact that with a few honourable exceptions, almost all such Englishmen as have direct dealings with Indians, do not much like the political progress of the country. The tone of the Anglo-Indian press—the mirror of the British mind in India—about Indian aspirations is well known. If there was any English statesman who was hated by the Britishers in India, he was Mr. Montagu. And why? Because of his supposed sympathy with this country. White mutiny in the regime of Lord Ripon pointed also to the same moral.

#### **4. MATERIAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES.**

The difficulties discussed so far were sentimental and social. Let us now come to more solid grounds. Let us now see what material benefit India has to get from and what she has to give to each unit of the Empire by her present connection with each of them.

**American Colonies.** India has little to get from Newzealand and Canada and little to give to them : the distance between these two units of the Empire and India is so great that politically and

commercially they are almost independent of each other.

**Africa** With British colonies in Africa Indian relations are of greater importance. These units of the Empire depend on India for wheat,, rice, tea and some other articles of food. In future India may also be able to export piece-goods, iron and some other manufactured goods to these parts. Thus African parts of the British Empire are actual and potential markets for Indian exports. On the other hand, India does not depend on any import from these countries, though South African coal trade largely depends on Indian markets. Commercially both the parties have equal advantages ; if African colonies are good markets for some of the Indian surplus produce, the Africander has the advantage of buying these articles at a lower price from India than it is possible for him to do from any other country. Whether India and these colonies are in the same Empire or not, such commercial relations must continue because such relations are to the mutual advantage of both.

From the political point of view the case is rather different. In the present stage of development, African colonies cannot singly withstand any outside attack; their army and navy are not strong enough for the purpose. India cannot help these colonies with navy because she has none, but her army can form a valuable asset to add to their meagre resources. India must employ a large standing army for her

own defence ; this standing army can be made available to Africanders more speedily and with less cost than it would be possible to secure military assistance from other parts of the Empire. In return for such help India has nothing to gain. African colonies have no navy of their own to help India when she requires it ; their army will not add much to Indian strength.

Thus it is found that by having any special relations with Africa India has very little to gain ; every advantage is on the side of the Colonies.

**Australia.** Commercial relations between India and Australia are not very important. Politically, India can render greater help to Australia than is possible for England or for any other British colony to do. India can send her armies to Australia in less time and more economically than any one else. For her own needs India must always be self-sufficient as regards her army ; what she requires from outside for a long time to come is the help of the navy, and that force Australia also does not possess of any value. In this case too it is evident that India has not much to gain, though Australia has every advantage on her side from close relationship between the two countries.

**England.** In the case of England the position is quite different. India is a great market for English manufactures ; and England would be hit hard if Indian markets were closed to her, or if India

bought her necessaries from other countries than England. But such a course would not be of any great advantage to India. For a long time to come India must import manufactured articles from outside ; and if that is so why should she not import them from England, if England is prepared to give her the best terms possible. England is also a good purchaser of Indian raw products, though for the last decade or so the percentage of Indian exports to England is on the decrease. For a long time to come India cannot make use of these materials within her own borders ; she must export them to other countries ; and if England pays a good price for them why not sell them to her as well as to any one else ? It is to the advantage of both the countries that there should exist mutual commercial relations between them.

India has to depend for the defences of her coasts on the English navy. Foreign domination has made India a cripple in that respect ; for a long time to come India must depend on some one to guard her coasts from invasion. In defending Indian ports England will be helping Indian interests as much as her own, because it is not an inconsiderable amount of money which the British people have invested in India. Other commercial advantages accruing to England from peace in India are also not small.

England has her limitations as regards the strength of her army. Indian army can prove of

great help to her at a time of need. This was clearly demonstrated during the Great War.

Reviewing the whole situation both from the political and the commercial point of view, it is found that, in the present conditions, by remaining within the Empire India has little to gain and much to lose by her connections with the Colonies, while these later have great advantage in an alliance with her. In the case of England, India will have the advantage of the English navy, though it would not cost England anything extra to extend such help to her, because she must have a strong navy to guard her own interests within and without the boundaries of India. In return England will be benefitted by the Indian army without any extra cost to India because she must have always at her disposal a strong army of her own for the protection of her frontiers.

It is not difficult to decide whether Indians should remain within the Empire where in the case of only one of its members India has almost equal advantages, and in the case of others all the advantages are on the one side and disadvantages on the other. It is doubtful if any man with a little of common sense could advise Indians to remain within such an Empire. Whatever relations India may have with England it is of no advantage to her to have any special relations with the colonies. To ask India to continue to have such one-sided relations is unreasonable ; the pact is unnatural and must break.

## 5. BRITISH EMPIRE A FEDERATION OF NATIONS

One other plea is put forward to keep India within the British Empire. It is argued that the British Empire is alliance of different peoples and different countries working together for the peace of the world, that it foreshadows the International Federation of the future when all countries would live side by side as friends strung together by a common constitution.

To be in close union with such an Empire meant strength, India would feel weak if she had to work out her destiny all alone. England was regarded the home of Western civilisation and India was the cradle of Eastern culture ; the intimate connection of two such countries would redound to the glory of both. By a hearty co-operation between Indians on the one side and the British people on the other, the fate of the whole world would be changed for the better ; there will be peace all round and no one would be allowed by these two peoples to do any mischief. The British Commonwealth would be a model for the League of Nations and by its example all refractory people would be hushed into sweet silence. East and West linked in a holy union would usher in the reign of contentment for the whole world ; all strife and war shall come to an end.

This is grand, even alluring. But the other side has not less weighty reasons in support of separation. The linking of England, one of the

most advanced countries in the world, with India, a country which for the last hundred years has not been allowed to progress freely, would not be helpful to the full and natural growth of the weaker country. It is always the case when two men of unequal strength are put together. The idea of equal partnership, it is argued, is only a myth. The stronger nation has always the tendency to exploit the weak partner.

For India and also for the whole world, it is further argued, it would be better if Indians closely allied themselves with their natural friends, than with those who happen to be connected with them only through an historical accident. It would be easy and advantageous for India to work together with Persia, Arabia, China, Siam, Japan and other Asiatic countries with whom she has many natural associations of race, religion and history, than with a people with whom she has no affinity. It looks strange that India should be hostile or indifferent towards her next door neighbours and should form such a close alliance with a country seven thousand miles away, and so different in culture and civilisation. It would be better for the future peace and progress of the world, if Asiatic countries grow as strong as European nations ; because when both the sides are equally strong, they would be glad to meet each other on an equal footing, and the ideas of exploitation and injustice would automatically vanish.

Let the East form an alliance of its own, Europe another, and America another; when these natural geographical alliances are formed then all the federated units could come together and guarantee the peace of the world. There was no peace in the British Empire itself; India, Ireland, Egypt were in revolt, how could then the British Empire work for the peace of the world? All high sounding phrases about the interests of humanity and world peace are no more than a clever camouflage to hoodwink the ignorant. As long as western attitude in politics was that of glorified robbers, as long as their dishonest designs prompted the European powers to quarrel amongst themselves like dogs and wolves, for them to come forward and put before the Asiatics the ideal of world peace was sheer hypocrisy; the great European war belied once for all their pretensions in this direction. To expect European nations to work for the peace of the world is, in the words of Tagore, not better than asking thieves and highwaymen of a country to organise its police force.

## 6. CLASH OF INTERESTS

Notwithstanding some mutual advantages on both sides the relations even between England and India are not quite natural; their interests are apt to clash with each other more often than it is generally believed. In the war between



Greece and Turkey, England had her sympathies with Greece ; race, religion and geographical associations naturally prompted the English to side with the Greeks ; no one had a right to object to such a course on the part of the English. On the other hand, similar causes prompted Indians to side with the Turks ; Indian sympathies with Turkey were as justifiable as those of England with Greece. The result was a constant tug-of-war between Indians on the one side and the British on the other. In the question of peace with Turkey these differences became acute to the extent that Mr. Montagu had to be dismissed from the Cabinet because of his leaning towards the Indian point of view.

The same was the case in regard to English dealings with Arabia, Mesopotamia and China. The British Government wanted to keep these countries under its control because they could form good markets for English manufactures and also because English capital could find good investment in exploiting their natural resources. Indians had no interest in such enterprises.

It is not difficult to imagine also other circumstances where Indian and British interests will be found diametrically opposed to each other. To end such awkward situations the best thing is that India and England should pursue their foreign policies quite independently. Both the countries can then go their own way without any bitterness or misunderstanding on either side.

The British Empire is the outward expression of what British Imperialism aims at. British Imperialism aims at the expansion of British interests. India by remaining in the Empire has helped Britain to dominate China, Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia and other down-trodden countries. These countries have now made up their mind to free themselves from foreign domination. By remaining within the British Empire Indians are liable to put themselves in the wrong with these neighbouring countries.

From whatever point one may discuss the question—from the ethical, social, economic, or political—it is in the best interests of India and England that India should have an unrestricted right of self-determination; India should no more be forced to hang like a tag on the British Empire portfolio. India and the Empire have only one thing in common: their history of the past two hundred years or so. And of this history every Indian must feel ashamed; and if conscience really has a prick and if the people infected with Imperial malady have left them any conscience, the British Imperialist too cannot feel proud of it.

Much of the loose talk about the relations of India with the British Empire will die out if Indians were to make clear their position in this respect to the whole world. The old creed of the Congress was not as honest in this respect as it

ought to have been ; it left the question undecided ; in fact it shirked the issue altogether.

The Republican Party in the Congress was seriously after changing the creed of the Congress so that they might make it clear to the world that they did not want to remain within the British Empire. But they attacked the problem from a wrong end ; they wanted to go out of the Empire because of the bitterness created by past associations. Those who felt that the Indian political difficulties were by their very nature only temporary could not support such efforts. But if the question was viewed from a higher point of view, the point of view of the good of India and England alike, it should be possible to come to an agreed solution of the difficulties arising out of the present situation.

The British may not like the idea of India going out of the Empire. Such an attitude is born of the present dependent position of India. No one likes to lose power ; but when India gets Swaraj, and the pride of power is gone out of the mind of the British people, they will not remain anxious to keep India within the Empire. Between Indians and the British a union of common interests may be possible ; but such union will be the result of free negotiations between the two high contracting parties.

It is certain that the question will finally be settled on its merits, and not under the influence of historical or political ideas. If it is to the advantage of both India and England, that both of them

should walk together in the future march of humanity, they shall do so ; but if it is found to be harmful to the free development of either of them, the sooner they part company the better ; no foolish sentiment should be allowed to interfere in the settlement of questions which mean life and death to those concerned.

It would be of some interest to the reader to know what clear-headed Britishers like Mr. Bernard Shaw think of the Indian connection with the British Empire. In one of his broad-cast talks, Mr. Shaw, discussing "This Empire Business," said :—

"The instinct not only of the distant Indian, but even of the nearby Welshman, the Irishman, and Scot, was to resent and repudiate Imperial dominance, so that if we were to preserve the connexion, we must make it appear flattering and advantageous to all the parts of the Empire, giving them Home Rule, calling them Dominions instead of Colonies, and putting them on the same footing as what we called the Mother Country, or even on a better one. But let them think what that might lead to. There was only a handful of English-speaking people with pink skins in the Dominions. The Indians out-numbered the rest of the Empire, including England, five to one. Consequently, the effect of making India a Dominion, in the Canadian sense, would be that England would become, in effect a Dominion of India, and England might not like that. England might break off from the Empire, as the United States did.

"I can not feel sure of the permanence of any intimate political combination not based on homogeneity, or the people in the combination being reasonably like

one another in their tastes and religious faiths, their traditions and hopes. A combination of the northern states of Europe with the United States of America, and with Australia and New Zealand, would be far more homogenous than any possible combination of Europeans with Asiatics. If I were a stranger from another planet I would say that an attempt to combine England with India before England was combined with the United States on the one side and with all her Western European neighbours on the other was a crazy reversal of the natural order of things, and could not possibly last. If we did not make the constituents of the Empire so independent of England that England would have nothing to do but support an enormously expensive Navy to protect them, they would break off as the American Colonies did ; yet if we granted them that independence, the tail would wag the dog, as it did very vigorously at the Ottawa Conference."

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE SALT SATYAGRAHA

**I**T was easier to declare Independence than to make it a reality. For two months after the Lahore resolution Congressmen remained fishing in uncertain waters, and knew not what to do. Meanwhile the party of violence, the terrorists, were gaining ground. Young men in the country were becoming impatient. The death of Lala Lajpat Rai soon after a lathi-charge by police under instructions of a young British police officer, and later on the death in jail of Jatindra Nath Dass, one of the accused charged with conspiracy to murder the police official who was alleged to have attacked Lala Lajpat Rai, stirred the youth of India to their inmost depths. Even at the Lahore session of the Congress it was with great difficulty that Mahatma Gandhi could keep the young party in control. Bhagat Singh and Dutt who threw bombs in the Legislative Assembly Chamber had become almost as important in popular imagination as Mahatmaji himself, and it was only by a narrow majority that Mahatmaji could persuade the Congress to condemn the party of violence.

Mahatmaji could not go on quietly witnessing the violence from the Indian youth even though it was argued that it was meant only as a counterblast

to the violence from the Government. He thought that the only way left to him to save the situation was to jump into the fire kept burning by both the parties. He was not sure if the country was prepared for mass civil disobedience ; he was not sure of the response which the country would make to his appeal to make a determined attempt to win Swaraj ; but he was sure of his own ability to make the required sacrifice ; and he asked his friends to support him in that resolve.

The country was prepared for individual and partial civil disobedience; the non-violent atmosphere was there as a result of non-co-operator's efforts ; but that did not mean that civil disobedience as a mass movement could be started at once all over the country. The only form of effective mass civil disobedience known to the Indian was non-payment of taxes. But the Congress organisation had not yet advanced to the stage to ensure success in that field, nor the people had yet undergone the necessary training and discipline required for such an object.

Mahatmaji was bent on doing something. There was no doubt that he had grown desperate ; but his desperation was that of a calculating optimist. He had done a great deal to prepare the country; the response was not adequate, the people still wallowed in ignorance and lethargy inherited through centuries of political inertia. He had appealed again and again to the good sense of the British

to grant Indians Swaraj that was their due ; but he saw no ray of hope from that direction either. The only manner in which he thought he could help the country was to throw himself into the sacrificial pit ; perhaps, he thought, the offering might melt hearts on both sides.

He called a meeting of the Congress Working Committee at his Ashram on Sabermati on the 14th of February 1930, and persuaded them to pass the following resolution :—

“ In the opinion of the Working Committee civil disobedience should be initiated and controlled by those who believe in non-violence for the purpose of achieving Purna Swaraj as an article of faith and as the Congress contains in its organisation not merely such men and women but also those who accept non-violence as a policy essential in the existing circumstances in the country, the Working Committee welcomes the proposal of Mahatma Gandhi and authorises him and those working with him who believe in non-violence as an article of faith to the extent above indicated, to start civil disobedience as and when they desire and in the manner and to the extent they decide. The Working Committee trusts that when the campaign is actually in action all Congressmen and others will extend to the civil resisters their full co-operation in every way possible and that they will observe and preserve complete non-violence notwithstanding any provocation that may be offered. The Working Committee further hopes that in the event of a mass movement taking place all those who are rendering voluntary co-operation to the Government, such as lawyers and those who are receiving so-called benefits from it, such as students will withdraw their co-operation or renounce benefits as the case may be and throw themselves into the final struggle for freedom.



The Working Committee trusts that in the event of the leaders being arrested and imprisoned those who are left behind and have the spirit of sacrifice and service in them will carry on the Congress organisation and guide the movement to the best of their ability."

The idea was to launch civil disobedience immediately and in a manner that should catch the imagination not only of Indians but also of the world at large. The best method to learn swimming is actually to take a plunge ; Indians could prepare themselves for achieving Swaraj only by actually fighting for it. The so-called preparatory programme which loomed so large in 1921 could no more enthuse the people ; civil disobedience itself could work both as a means and as an end.

On the 2nd of March, 1930, Mahatmaji sent the following letter to the Viceroy :—

SATYAGRAHA ASHRAM.

*Sabarmati*, March, 2nd 1930.

DEAR FRIEND,

Before embarking on Civil Disobedience and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would fain approach you and find a way out.

My personal faith is absolutely clear. I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less fellow human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst, therefore, I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend harm to a single Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India.

I must not be misunderstood. Though I hold the British rule in India to be a curse, I do not, therefore, consider Englishmen in general to be worse than any other people on earth. I have the privilege of claiming many Englishmen as dearest friends. Indeed much that I have learnt of the evil of British rule is due to the writings of frank and courageous Englishmen who have not hesitated to tell the unpalatable truth about that rule.

And why do I regard the British rule as a curse ?

It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously expensive military and civil administration which the country can never afford.

It has reduced us politically to serfdom. It has sapped the foundations of our culture. And, by the policy of cruel disarmament, it has degraded us spiritually. Lacking the inward strength, we have been reduced, by all but universal disarmament, to a state bordering on cowardly helplessness.

In common with many of my countrymen, I had hugged the fond hope that the proposed Round Table Conference might furnish a solution. But, when you said plainly that you could not give any assurance that you or the British Cabinet would pledge yourselves to support a scheme of full Dominion Status, the Round Table Conference could not possibly furnish the solution for which vocal India is consciously, and the dumb millions are unconsciously, thirsting. Needless to say there never was any question of Parliament's verdict being anticipated. Instances are not wanting of the British Cabinet, in anticipation of the Parliamentary verdict, having pledged itself to a particular policy.

The Delhi interview having miscarried, there was no option for Pandit Moti Lal Nehru and me but to take steps to carry out the solemn resolution of the Congress arrived at in Calcutta at its Session in 1928.

But the Resolution of Independence should cause no alarm, if the words Dominion Status mentioned

in your announcement had been used in its accepted sense. For, has it not been admitted by responsible British statesmen, that Dominion Status is virtual Independence ? What, however, I fear is that there never has been any intention of granting such Dominion Status to India in the immediate future.

But this is all past history. Since the announcement many events have happened which show unmistakably the trend of British policy.

It seems as clear as daylight that responsible British statesmen do not contemplate any alteration in British policy that might adversely affect Britain's commerce with India or require an impartial and close scrutiny of Britain's transactions with India. If nothing is done to end the process of exploitation India must be bled with an ever increasing speed. The Finance Member regards as a settled fact the 1.6 ratio which by a stroke of the pen drains India of a few crores. And when a serious attempt is being made through a civil form of direct action, to unsettle this fact, among many others, even you cannot help appealing to the wealthy landed classes to help you to crush that attempt in the name of an order that grinds India to atoms.

Unless those who work in the name of the nation understand and keep before all concerned, the motive that lies behind the craving for Independence, there is every danger of Independence itself coming to us so charged as to be of no value to those toiling voiceless millions for whom it is sought and for whom it is worth taking. It is for that reason that I have been recently telling the public what Independence should really mean.

Let me put before you some of the salient points.

The terrific pressure of land revenue, which furnishes a large part of the total, must undergo considerable modification in an Independent India. Even the much vaunted permanent settlement benefits the few rich zamindars, not the ryots. The ryot has remained as helpless as ever. He is a mere tenant at will. Not only,

then, has the land revenue to be considerably reduced, but the whole revenue system has to be so revised as to make the ryot's good its primary concern. But the British system seems to be designed to crush the very life out of him. Even the salt he must use to live is so taxed as to make the burden fall heaviest on him, if only because of the heartless impartiality of its incidence. The tax shows itself still more burdensome on the poor man when it is remembered that salt is the one thing he must eat more than the rich man both individually and collectively. The drink and drug revenue, too, is derived from the poor. It saps the foundations both of their health and morals. It is defended under the false plea of individual freedom, but, in reality, is maintained for its own sake. The ingenuity of the authors of the reforms of 1919 transferred this revenue to the so-called responsible part of dyarchy, so as to throw the burden of prohibition on it, thus, from the very beginning, rendering it powerless for good. If the unhappy minister wipes out this revenue he must starve education, since in the existing circumstances he has no new source of replacing that revenue. If the weight of taxation has crushed the poor from above, the destruction of the central supplementary industry, *i. e.* hand-spinning, has undermined their capacity for producing wealth. The tale of India's ruination is not complete without reference to the liabilities incurred in her name. Sufficient has been recently said about these in the public press. It must be the duty of a free India to subject all the liabilities to the strictest investigation, and repudiate those that may be adjudged by an impartial tribunal to be unjust and unfair.

The iniquities sampled above are maintained in order to carry on a foreign administration, demonstrably the most expensive in the world. Take your own salary. It is over Rs. 21,000 per month, besides many other indirect additions. The British Prime Minister gets £ 5000 per year, *i. e.*, over Rs. 5400 per month at the present rate of exchange. You are

getting over Rs. 700 per day against India's average income of less than annas 2 per day. The Prime Minister gets Rs. 180 per day against Great Britain's average income of nearly Rs. 2 per day. Thus you are getting much over five thousand times India's average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only ninety times Britain's average income. On bended knee I ask you to ponder over this phenomenon. I have taken a personal illustration to drive home a painful truth. I have too great a regard for you as a man to wish to hurt your feelings. I know that you do not need the salary you get. Probably the whole of your salary goes for charity. But a system that provides for such an arrangement deserves to be summarily scrapped. What is true of the Viceregal salary is true generally of the whole administration.

A radical cutting down of the revenue, therefore, depends upon an equally radical reduction in the expenses of the administration. This means a transformation of the scheme of Government. This transformation is impossible without Independence. Hence, in my opinion, the spontaneous demonstration of 26th January, in which hundreds of thousands of villagers instinctively participated. To them Independence means deliverance from the killing weight.

Not one of the great British political parties, it seems to me, is prepared to give up the Indian spoils to which Great Britain helps herself from day to day, often in spite of the unanimous opposition of Indian opinion.

Nevertheless, if India is to live as a Nation, if the slow death by starvation of her people is to stop, some remedy must be found for immediate relief. The proposed Conference is certainly not the remedy. It is not a matter of carrying conviction by arguments. The matter resolves itself into one of matching forces. Conviction or no conviction, Great Britain would defend her Indian commerce and interests by all the forces at her command. India must consequently evolve force enough to free herself from that embrace of death.

It is common cause that, however disorganised, and, for the time being, insignificant, it may be, the party of violence is gaining ground and making itself felt. Its end is the same as mine. But I am convinced that it cannot bring the desired relief to the dumb millions. And the conviction is growing deeper and deeper in me that nothing but unadulterated non-violence can check the organised violence of the British Government. Many think that non-violence is not an active force. My experience, limited though it undoubtedly is, shows that non-violence can be an intensely active force. It is my purpose to set in motion that force as well against the organised violent force of the British rule as the unorganised violent force of the growing party of violence. To sit still would be to give rein to both the forces above mentioned. Having an unquestioning and immovable faith in the efficacy of non-violence, as I know it, it would be sinful on my part to wait any longer.

This non-violence will be expressed through civil disobedience, for the moment confined to the inmates of the Satyagraha Ashram, but ultimately designed to cover all those who choose to join the movement with its obvious limitation.

I know that in embarking on non-violence, I shall be running what might fairly be termed a mad risk. But the victories of truth have never been won without risk, often of the gravest character. Conversion of a nation that has consciously or unconsciously preyed upon another, far more numerous, far more ancient and no less cultured than itself, is worth any amount of risk.

I have deliberately used the word conversion. For my ambition is no less than to convert the British people through non-violence, and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India. I do not seek to harm your people. I want to serve them even as I want to serve my own. I believe that I have always served them. I served them up to 1919 blindly. But when my

eyes were opened and I conceived non-co-operation, the object still was to serve them. I employed the same weapon that I have in all humility successfully used against the dearest members of my family. If I have equal love for your people with mine it will not long remain hidden. It will be acknowledged by them even as the members of my family acknowledged it after they had tried me for several years. If the people join me as I expect they will, the sufferings they will undergo, unless the British nation sooner retraces its steps, will be enough to melt the stoniest hearts.

The plan through Civil Disobedience will be to combat such evils as I have sampled out. If we want to sever the British connection it is because of such evils. When they are removed the path becomes easy. Then the way to friendly a negotiation will be open. If the British commerce with India is purified of greed, you will have no difficulty in recognising our Independence. I respectfully invite you then to pave the way for immediate removal of those evils, and thus open a way for a real conference between equals, interested only in promoting the common good of mankind through voluntary fellowship and in arranging terms of mutual help and commerce equally suited to both. You have unnecessarily laid stress upon the communal problems that unhappily affect this land. Important though they undoubtedly are for the consideration of any scheme of Government, they have little bearing on the greater problems which are above communities and which affect them all equally. If you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and my letter makes no appeal to your heart, on the 11th day of this month, I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take, to disregard the provisions of the Salt laws. I regard this tax to be the most iniquitous of all from the poor man's stand-point. As the Independence movement is essentially for the poorest in the land the beginning will be made with this evil. The wonder is that we have submitted to the cruel monopoly for so long. It

is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me. I hope that there will be tens of thousands ready in a disciplined manner, to take up the work after me and, in the act of disobeying the Salt Act to lay themselves open to the penalties of a law that should never have disfigured the Statute book.

I have no desire to cause you unnecessary embarrassment, or any at all, so far as I can help. If you think that there is any substance in my letter, and if you will care to discuss matters with me, and if to that end you would like me to postpone publication of this letter, I shall gladly refrain on receipt of a telegram to that effect soon after this reaches you. You will, however, do me the favour not to deflect me from my course unless you can see your way to conform to the substance of this letter.

This letter is not in any way intended as a threat but is a simple and sacred duty peremptory on a civil resister. Therefore I am having it specially delivered by a young English friend who believes in the Indian cause and is a full believer in non-violence and whom Providence seems to have sent to me, as it were, for the very purpose.

I remain,

Your sincere friend,

M. K. GANDHI.

Lord Irwin's reply to this letter was curt, cold and formal. On the 12th of March Mahatmaji left Ahmedabad for Dandi to break the Salt Laws on the sea side there. Mahatmaji's march with his disciples to the sea side attracted attention all over the world. Mahatmaji's hopes were more than fulfilled; enthusiasm ran high from one end of the country to the other.



Mahatmaji reached Dandi on the 5th of April and committed the breach of law the same day by gathering salt from the sea. On April 6th he issued instructions for the breaking of the Salt Laws all over the country. As a consequence the law was broken at least in five thousand meetings and by five million people.

Government did not arrest Mahatmaji. It only arrested here and there some of his prominent lieutenants responsible for the movement in Gujerat and other provinces. It did not also touch the general public ; the rank and file were allowed to break Salt Laws and please themselves. Technical breaking of the law did not affect the Government purse ; it could easily afford to ignore the movement.

Mahatmaji could not rest contented with such a state of affairs. Government's prestige was gone ; but yet it could not be shaken from its secure position. Mahatmaji desired to force Government to violence so that it might exhaust all its powers on him and his followers and finally be obliged to come to just and honourable terms with him. Mahatmaji decided to move further and gave notice to the Viceroy that he would attack the Government Salt Depots at Dharsana and occupy them for public use. The notice ran as follows :—

Dear Friend,

God willing, it is my intention to set out for Dharasana and reach there with my companions and demand possession of the Salt Works. The public have been told that Dharasana is private property. This is mere camouflage. It is as effectively under Government control as the Viceroy's House. Not a pinch of salt can be removed without the previous sanction of the authorities.

It is possible for you to prevent this raid, as it has been playfully and mischievously called, in three ways :

1. by removing the salt tax ;
2. by arresting me and my party unless the country can, as I hope it will, replace every one taken away ;
3. by sheer *goondaism* unless every head broken is replaced, as I hope it will.

It is not without hesitation that the step has been decided upon. I had hoped that the Government would fight the civil resisters in a civilised manner. I could have had nothing to say if in dealing with the civil resisters the Government had satisfied itself with applying the ordinary processes of law. Instead, whilst the known leaders have been dealt with more or less according to the legal formality, the rank and file has been often savagely and in some cases even indecently assaulted. Had these been isolated cases, they might have been overlooked. But accounts have come to me from Bengal, Behar, Utkal, U. P. Delhi and Bombay confirming the experiences of Gujarat of which I have ample evidence at my disposal. In Karachi, Peshawar and Madras the firing would appear to have been unprovoked and unnecessary. Bones have been broken, private parts have been squeezed for the purpose of making volunteers give up, to the Government valueless, to the volunteers precious salt. At Mathura an Assistant Magistrate is said to have snatched the national flag from a ten year old boy. The crowd that demanded restoration of the

flag thus illegally seized, is reported to have been mercilessly beaten back. That the flag was subsequently restored betrayed a guilty conscience. In Bengal there seem to have been only a few prosecutions and assaults about salt, but unthinkable cruelties are said to have been practised in the act of snatching flags from volunteers. Paddy fields are reported to have been burnt, eatables forcibly taken. A vegetable market in Gujarat has been raided because the dealers would not sell vegetables to officials. These acts have taken place in front of crowds who, for the sake of Congress mandate have submitted without retaliation. I ask you to believe the accounts given by men pledged to truth. Repudiation even by high officials has, as in the Bardoli case, often proved false. The officials, I regret to have to say, have not hesitated to publish falsehoods to the people even during the last five weeks. I take the following samples from Government notices issued from Collector's offices in Gujarat :

1. 'Adults use five pounds of salt per year, therefore, pay three aunas per head as tax. ... If Government removed the monopoly people will have to pay higher prices and in addition make good to the Government the loss sustained by the removal of the monopoly. . . The salt you take from the sea shore is not eatable, therefore the Government destroys it.'

2. 'Mr. Gandhi says that Government has destroyed handspinning in this country, whereas everybody knows that this is not true, because throughout the country, there is not a village where handspinning of cotton is not going on. Moreover in every province cotton spinners are shown superior methods and are provided with better instruments at less price and are thus helped by Government.'

3. 'Out of every five rupees of the debt that the Government has incurred rupees four have been beneficially spent.'

I have taken these three sets of statements from three different leaflets. I venture to suggest that every

one of these statements is demonstrably false, The daily consumption of salt by an adult is three times the amount stated and therefore the poll tax that the salt tax undoubtedly is, is at least 9 as per head per year. And this tax is levied from man, woman, child and domestic cattle irrespective of age and health.

It is a wicked falsehood to say that every village has a spinning wheel, and that the spinning movement is in any shape or form encouraged or supported by the Government. Financiers can better dispose of the falsehood that four out of every five rupees of the public debt is used for the benefit of the public. But those falsehoods are mere samples of what people know is going on in everyday contact with the Government. Only the other day a Gujarati poet, a brave man, was convicted on perjured official evidence in spite of his emphatic statement that at the time mentioned he was sleeping soundly in another place.

Now for instance of official inactivities, Liquor dealers have assaulted pickets admitted by officials to have been peaceful and sold liquor in contravention of regulations. The officials have taken no notice either of the assaults or the illegal sales of liquor. As to the assaults, though they are known to everybody, they may take shelter under the plea that they have received no complaints.

And now you have sprung upon the country a Press Ordinance surpassing any hitherto known in India. You have found a short cut through the law's delay in the matter of the trial of Bhagat Singh and others by doing away with the ordinary procedure. Is it any wonder if I call all these official activities and inactivities a veiled form of Martial Law ? Yet this is only the fifth week of the struggle !

Before then the reign of terrorism that has just begun overwhelms India, I feel that I must take a bolder step, and if possible divert your wrath in a cleaner if more drastic channel. You may not know the things that I have described. You may not even now believe in them. I can but invite your serious attention to them.

Any way I feel that it would be cowardly on my part not to invite you to disclose to the full the leonine paws of authority so that the people who are suffering tortures and destruction of their property may not feel that I, who had perhaps been the chief party inspiring them to action that has brought to right light the Government in its true colours, had left any stone unturned to work out the Satyagraha programme as fully as it was possible under given circumstances.

For, according to the science of Satyagraha, the greater the repression and lawlessness on the part of authority, the greater should be the suffering courted by the victims. Success is the certain result of suffering of the extremest character, voluntarily undergone.

I know the dangers attendant upon the methods adopted by me. But the country is not likely to mistake my meaning. I say what I mean and think. And I have been saying for the last fifteen years in India and outside for twenty years more and repeat now that the only way to conquer violence is through non-violence pure and undefiled. I have said also that every violent act, word and even thought interferes with the progress of non-violent action. If in spite of such repeated warnings people will resort to violence, I must disown responsibility save such as inevitably attaches to every human being for the acts of every other human being. But the question of responsibility apart, I dare not postpone action on any cause whatsoever, if non-violence is the force the seers of the world have claimed it to be and if I am not to belie my own extensive experience of its working.

But I would fain avoid the further step. I would therefore ask you to remove the tax which many of your illustrious countrymen have condemned in unmeasured terms and which, as you could not have failed to observe, has evoked universal protest and resentment expressed in civil disobedience. You may condemn civil disobedience as much as you like. Will you prefer violent revolt to civil disobedience? If you say, as you have said, that the civil disobedience must end in violence,

history will pronounce the verdict that British Government not bearing because not understanding non-violence goaded human nature to violence, which it could understand, and deal with. But inspite of the goading I shall hope that God will give the people of India wisdom and strength to withstand every temptation and provocation to violence.

If, therefore, you cannot see your way to remove the salt tax, and remove the prohibition on private salt-making, I must reluctantly commence the march adumbrated in the opening paragraph of my letter.

I am,

Your sincere friend,

M. K. GANDHI.

The depot selected for the first attack was situated at Dharasana in the Surat District. It was argued that the natural salt, like air and water, was the property of the public. Government had no right to create a monopoly of it against the interests of the people who had every right to the so-called Government Stores. If the Government wanted the people to keep back from these stores it could do so only at the point of the bayonet.

After this notice Government could no more ignore the movement; it was forced to arrest Mahatmaji on the 5th of the May, 1930.

After Mahatmaji's arrest Salt Depots were raided by volunteers led by prominent Congressmen. The most prominent among them were Abbas Tyabji, a Moslem veteran about 80 years old, and

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the Nightingale of Indian politics. These raids were finally discontinued in the month of June as during the monsoon the operations to collect salt had naturally to be suspended.

The movement to break the Salt Laws, as already stated, spread throughout the country and the salt Satyagraha was practised everywhere, though the arrests as yet were only few and far between. It was mostly the tall poppies that were gathered ; the smaller fry, if one could use the mixed metaphor, were generally left untouched.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### THE SECOND CAMPAIGN

THE All India Congress Committee met at Ahmedabad on the 21st of March, 1930, and endorsed the resolution about Salt Satyagraha passed by the Working Committee on the 14th of February. The All India Congress Committee resolution ran as follows :—

“This meeting of the A.I.C.C. approves of and endorses the resolution of the Working Committee dated February 16, authorising Mahatma Gandhi to initiate and control civil disobedience and congratulates him and his companions and the country on the march begun by him on the 12th instant in pursuit of his plan for civil disobedience. The Committee hopes that the whole country will respond to the action taken by Gandhiji so as to bring the campaign for Purna Swaraj to a speedy and successful issue.

The A.I.C.C. hereby authorises the Provincial Congress Committees subject to any directions that the Working Committee might issue from time to time, to organise and undertake such civil disobedience as to them may seem proper and in the manner that may appear to them to be most suitable. The Committee, however, hopes that the provinces, so far as is possible, will concentrate on a civil breach of the Salt Laws. The Committee trusts that *while full preparation will be carried on in spite of any Government interference, civil disobedience will not be started till Gandhiji has reached his destination and has actually committed a breach of the Salt Laws and given the word.* In the event, however, of Gandhiji's earlier arrest the provinces shall have full liberty to start civil disobedience.”



This resolution was passed before Mahatmaji was arrested. After Mahatmaji's arrest the Working Committee met at Allahabad and took charge of the movement in its own hands. Finding that the breach of Salt Laws alone would not serve the purpose, amongst others, it passed the following resolutions :—

1. The Working Committee Congratulates the Satyagrahi Volunteers who accompanied Mahatma Gandhi at Karada and trusts that fresh batches would take up raids and decides that Dharsana should henceforth be treated as an all India centre for salt raids.

2. The Working Committee records its appreciation of the lead given by Mahatmaji for the conduct of the great campaign, reiterates its abiding faith in Civil Disobedience and resolves to carry on the struggle during the incarceration of Mahatmaji with redoubled vigour.

3. In the opinion of the committee the moment has arrived when the entire nation should make a supreme effort to achieve the goal and it calls upon students, lawyers and other professional men, workers and peasants, merchants, industrialists and Government servants and all others to contribute to the success of the fight for freedom, making all services they are capable of.

4. The Committee holds that in the interest of the country, it is essential to carry out a complete boycott of foreign cloth throughout the country without delay, and for that purpose to take effective steps to prevent sales of existing stock, to secure the cancellation of orders already placed and to prevent the placing of future orders. The Committee calls upon all Congress bodies to carry on an intensive propaganda of the boycott of foreign cloth and to picket shops dealing in foreign cloth.

5. The Committee while appreciating the efforts of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya to help the boycott movement, regrets that it can not endorse any agreement or

understanding that the sale of the existing stock is to be permitted in return for the promises by the dealers not to import or order foreign cloth for a specified period. The Committee directs all Congress organisations to be no party to any such or similar agreements or understandings with the dealers and importers of foreign cloth.

6. The Committee decides to promote the increase of the production of hand spun and hand woven cloth, in order to meet the growing demand and to set up organisations to introduce the system of exchanging khaddar cloth for hand spun yarn in addition to selling it for money, and calls upon Congress organisations generally to encourage hand spinning. The Committee appeals to every individual to devote some part of his or her time to spinning.

7. The committee is of opinion that the time has arrived for the inauguration of no-tax campaign by non-payment of specified taxes in certain provinces and that a beginning should be made by non-payment of the land tax in the provinces where the ryotwari system prevails, such as Gujerat, Maharashtra, Karnatak, Andhra, Tamil Naidu and the Punjab and the non-payment of the Chowkidari tax in provinces like Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. It calls upon such provinces to organise campaigns of non-payment of the land tax or chowkidari tax in areas selected by the provincial Congress Committee.

8. It calls upon the Provincial Congress Committees to continue and extend the manufacture of contraband salt and directs that technical breaches of the salt law shall be continued with redoubled energy at places where it is sought to be prevented by the Government by arrests or otherwise. The Committee resolves that as a mark of country's disapproval of the salt Law Congress organisation should organise public breaches of those laws on every Sunday.

9. The Committee approves and confirms the action of the Acting President in permitting the breach of forest laws in the C. P. and resolves that in other provinces similar laws in force may be breached after the sanction of the Provincial Congress Committees.

10. The Committee authorises the Acting President to enter into negotiations with Indian mill owners with a view to devising means to prevent an unfair increase in the prices of Swadeshi mill cloth and the manufacture of spurious khaddar and generally to take steps to promote the boycott of foreign cloth.

11. Regarding the boycott of British goods it urges the people to make earnest attempts to bring about an effective boycott thereof at an early date.

12. The Committee further appeals strongly to the public to boycott all British banking, insurance, shopping and similar other institutions.

13. The Committee once again emphasises the necessity of carrying on an intensive propaganda in favour of total prohibition and calls upon the Provincial Congress Committees to picket liquor or toddy shops.

14. The Committee regrets the outbreak of mob-violence in certain places and cannot too strongly condemn such violence. The Committee desires to emphasise the necessity of a strict observance of non-violence.

15. The Committee strongly condemns the Press ordinance and appreciates the action of those newspapers which have refused to submit to it. It calls upon Indian newspapers which have not yet ceased publication or having ceased publication have re-appeared to stop further issues. The Committee calls upon the people to boycott all Anglo-Indian and Indian papers which continue publication hereafter.

These resolutions were still further strengthened by the Working Committee in its meeting held at Allahabad on the 27th June. The new resolutions ran :

1. The Working Committee notes with satisfaction the progress made in the boycott of foreign cloth in a very large number of cities, towns and villages and appreciates the patriotic spirit of the dealers who have in pursuance of the resolutions of the Committee not only stopped the sale of such cloth but also have agreed to cancel orders already placed and refrain from placing fresh orders, thereby causing a very considerable

fall in the imports of all foreign textile goods. The Committee calls upon the dealers in foreign cloth in places where they have not yet stopped the sale of such cloth to stop such sales forthwith, and on their failure to do so directs the Congress organizations concerned to enforce strict and vigorous picketing of the shops of such dealers. The Committee expects the sales of foreign cloth will be stopped everywhere in India before the 15th July, 1930, and calls upon the Provincial Congress Committees to make a full report on that day.

2. The Committee calls upon all Congress organisations and the country at large to take more rigorous steps to bring about a complete boycott of British goods generally than have so far been taken by giving preference to goods of non-British manufacture wherever similar Swadeshi goods are not available.

3. This Committee calls upon the people to organise and enforce a strict social boycott of all Government officials and others known to have participated directly in the atrocities committed upon the people to stifle the national movement.

4. The Working Committee calls attention to the resolution of the Indian National Congress passed at Gaya in 1922 and at Lahore in 1929 whereby the Congress repudiated the financial burdens and obligations directly or indirectly imposed on India by the foreign administration except such burdens and obligations as are adjudged to be just by an independent tribunal and advises the Indian public not to buy or accept any fresh bonds of the Government of India whether as new investment or in conversion of their existing holdings of the same or similar bonds.

5. Whereas the present legal tender value in exchange of the silver rupee in India has been fixed arbitrarily by the British Government in the teeth of strong public opposition, while the intrinsic value of the rupee is not even a third of the legal tender value so fixed, and whereas there is imminent likelihood of further depreciation of the value of the rupee, the

Working Committee strongly advises the people of India not to accept rupees or currency notes in payment of any claims against the Government but to insist on payment in gold wherever possible. The Committee further advises the people to take the earliest opportunity to convert all their currency holdings of rupees or notes into gold and particularly to insist on all payments for their exports to be made in gold only.

6. In the opinion of this Committee the time has arrived when students of Indian colleges should take their full share in the movement of national freedom and directs all Provincial Committees to call upon such students within their respective jurisdictions to place their services at the disposal of the Congress in such manner and to such extent including complete suspension of their studies as the exigencies of the national movement may require. The Committee trusts that all students will readily respond to such call.

7. Whereas in pursuance of the policy of repression the Government has declared a certain number of Provincial and District Congress Committees and other subordinate and allied organisations as unlawful Associations, and whereas it is likely that other Congress Committees and organisations may be similarly declared unlawful Associations in the near future, this Committee directs the Committees and organisations affected by those declarations, and those that may hereafter be similarly affected, to continue to function as before, and carry out the Congress programme notwithstanding such declarations.

8. The Committee notes the amazing declaration of the U. P. Governor-in-Council forfeiting copies of Resolution No. 5 of this Committee about the duty of military and Police forces passed at its meeting held on the 7th June. The Committee maintains that the use of the Military and the Police by the Government as their tools for perpetrating shocking atrocities on the people would have fully justified it in passing a much stronger resolution but for the present it was considered

sufficient to pass the resolution as it stands containing as it does merely an accurate statement of the existing law on the subject. The Committee calls upon all Congress organisations to give the widest publicity to the said resolution in spite of the said declaration.

9. Whereas the Government has since the last meeting of the Committee continued its headlong career of relentless repression to stifle the Satyagraha movement and has to that end permitted act of increasing cruelty and brutality to be committed by its servants and agents, this Committee congratulates the country on the splendid stand made by the people against the atrocities committed by the officials and reiterates its warning to the Government that the people of India will continue their fight for freedom to the bitter end in spite of all conceivable tortures inflicted on them.

10. The Committee notes with grateful appreciation that the women of India are continuing to take an increasing part in the national movement and bravely suffering assaults, ill-treatment and imprisonment.

All these resolutions passed by the Working Committee differed materially in expression and spirit from those passed before Mahatmaji was arrested. Mahatmaji was anxious to avoid all violence even by non-members. He regarded the Congress as representative of the whole nation. It was for this reason that, to begin with, he confined the Salt Satyagraha to those few people who were thoroughly trained, and who unhesitatingly believed in non-violence not merely as a policy but as a creed. Civil disobedience started under such limitations could go on for as long a time as necessary without any fear of violence from any quarter.

The Congress had full faith in Mahatmaji and gave him all the powers he required. But when he was arrested, the Working Committee felt it necessary to extend its activities. It stuck to non-violence, but it also invited those persons to participate in the movement who believed in non-violence merely as a policy best suited to meet the needs of the present situation. The Working Committee also extended its operations beyond Salt Satyagraha ; in fact it took up the whole of the fighting programme, and appealed to every Indian to do his best to give effect to that programme in any way possible for him. The Congress admitted that it represented the nation as a whole, but it could not make itself responsible for the actions of those who did not agree with it in its creed or work. If there was any outburst of abject support for the party in power, as in the case of some reactionery Princes, or if there was any display of violence by some misguided and impatient youths, Congress was not bound to pay heed to either ; it must go on with its own non-violent programme unperturbed until it reached the national goal. Hence the difference in the resolutions passed before Mahatmaji was imprisoned and after it.

After these resolutions, the Non-co-operation Movement was in full swing. Mahatmaji was arrested on the 5th of May, 1930 ; Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the President of the Indian National Congress, had previously been arrested on the 14th of

April ; and Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, the Acting President, was arrested on the 30th of June. These arrests constituted an open challenge to the Congress. Government had decided to rule India by the use of force. It could not tolerate any longer the breaches of Law ; King's Government must be carried on.

Peaceful processions were fired at several places, and Martial Law was declared in Peshawar and Sholapur. Lord Irwin issued as many as eleven Ordinances to crush the Congress and the Civil Disobedience Movement. The "National Parliament" was declared unlawful, and thousands of peaceful picketers were sent to the prison. The press was gagged and news of the excesses of the Police and the Military was censored. Even those who were not Congressmen were punished when they attempted to enquire into the alleged atrocities committed by officials in the name of law and order. Public enquiries and public reports were suppressed ; official agencies were established to dole out doctred news to the public inside and outside India.

But the Nationalists stood the test. They were not cowed down. Mahatma Gandhi had invited suffering and the Government responded in a liberal manner. As many as sixty thousand men, women and children were locked up in jails ; the number of those wounded exceeded five thousand, and those killed numbered about four hundred. It was a gala day both for the official who was out to



show his strength and for the Satyagrahi who was out to win his opponents by welcoming suffering at their hands.

The breach of Salt Laws upset Government's nerves to some extent but otherwise it was not seriously hurt. It was for this reason that Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, the Acting President of the Congress, and his colleagues in the Working Committee, brought out all the weapons in the armoury of the Indian Satyagrahi. They knew that the party of violence was growing in strength and this was perhaps the last chance for non-violence to win Indian freedom. They exhorted Indians to do their best in every possible manner to help and advance the cause of non-violent non-co-operation.

Apart from defying the various Ordinances which the Governor General had issued, the most important items in the programme that were made use of by Congressmen were :—

1. the boycott of British goods, specially British cloth ;
2. the boycott of liquor ; and
3. the non-payment of land tax.

Of these the land tax was affected substantially only in Gujerat. Efforts were made to popularise the movement in the Punjab, but it did not go beyond the initial stage. Bengal took up the non-payment of *Chaukidari* tax, but met the same fate as the Punjab. In the C. P. Forest Laws were broken more successfully, and gave the Government there lot of trouble.

The propaganda to boycott liquor produced substantial results. Some of the Provincial Governments lost as much as 20% of their revenue under this head.

The item that succeeded most was the boycott of British goods, specially British cloth. From more than sixty crores of rupees the import of British cloth dwindled down to about 20 crores in 1930, and much of it had been ordered before the Non-cooperation Movement was started. Most of the cloth that comes to India comes through Bombay; and the Bombay piece-goods merchants, with a sacrifice unknown in the history of boycott movement, led the whole of India in this respect. More than 50 per cent of the credit for the boycott of British cloth was due to the Bombay merchants alone.

The part played by Indian women during this campaign was a wonder and a revelation. The Indian woman had been blamed by all parties; her ignorance and superstition had been regarded as the main cause of Indian backwardness. But the Non-cooperation fight showed of what wonderful material her heart was made; how brave and self-sacrificing she was. Whenever the number of Congress volunteers went down, it were young Indian girls who kept the National flag flying. It was the example of the women that revived the enthusiasm among men again and again when repression was at its worst and the movement seemed about to die.\*

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\*For full description of the campaign, and the part played in it by the Indian women, the reader is referred to the report of the Congress Secretaries for the year 1930.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

**W**HEN the idea of the Round Table Conference was first formulated there were some among the Moderate leaders who supported the Congress demand for a clear definition of the object of the Conference. The Congress insisted that it was no use going to the Conference unless the British Government were prepared to grant India an equal status and the Conference were to meet to decide that issue finally. But the Moderate leaders gave in and decided to go to London without any assurances on the points raised at the beginning.

When the Civil Disobedience grew in pace and intensity, efforts were made again and again to rope in the Congress ; but Mahatmaji and his colleagues could not be deceived ; they stuck to their original position. Government knew that the Moderates had no backing in the country and could not deliver the goods. Hence, though on one side it tried to cow down the Congress politicians by ruthless repression, it made more than one effort to entice them into the fold. But as Lord Irwin could not make up his mind to concede the Congress demands, negotiations always failed.

The Conference was convened in London in the month of November. Indians who were invited to take part represented nobody ; all of them were nominees of the Viceroy ; even the legislative bodies were not consulted when making these nominations. The Congress politicians knew that the main achievement of the Round Table Conference would be demonstrated to the world, as the Simon Report had attempted to do, that Indians were divided amongst themselves and were not fit for a democratic form of government. The Moslems were set against the Hindus ; the Sikhs against the Moslems ; the Labour against the Capital ; the Tenants against the Landlords ; and the Princes against their subjects ; all against one and one against all, with a sprinkling here and there of some self-appointed mediators for whose opinions no one cared.

It was a new Babel, and no good could come out of it. Unless Indians knew where they stood it was no use taking any part in such a sorry spectacle. The Viceroy now and then talked of Dominion Status, but he was equally earnest and prompt to make it clear that the setting up of a goal and its achievement did not mean one and the same thing. When British statesmen talked of Dominion Status, they talked of it as an ideal towards which Indians were to move ; it did not mean that England could agree to see Indians reaching that stage immediately or even within a reasonably short time.

The proceedings of the Conference surprised nobody. The Indians who took part in the discussions at St. James Palace were nominees of the Government, and they played the game of the Government to perfection. After some general claptrap in the beginning, they settled down to quarrel amongst themselves like wild cats and could agree only to one fundamental fact that such irresponsible persons as the members of the Conference were, could never agree on anything. There were wheels within wheels ; wire-pullers set to administer jerks to different parties from different positions. The result of such machinations was that the Conference dispersed after coming to no definite decision about the future status of the country. The question of the future of India was left in the hands of the British Government, which had full liberty to deal with the so-called Conference decisions in any manner it liked ; none of the important decisions were backed by any unanimous agreement.

Whatever little was conceded was done not because certain Indians had gone to London and there successfully argued out the case of their country, but because the Government thought that on account of unrest and trouble in the country, it must show that it was prepared to make some concessions. Congressmen did not go to the Conference because they knew that Indians were not yet strong enough to dictate their terms, and that whatever Government could yield due to the

pressure of the Civil Disobedience Movement, it would yield whether Mr. A went to the Conference or Mr. B. Mahatma Gandhi's influence on the Conference was greater while he was in jail, than it would have been had he been a member of it.

British statesmen understood the situation well and played their cards cleverly. By offering some sort of provincial autonomy and a show of partial responsibility at the Centre, they sought to win the co-operation of the Indian people and to put off the evil day when India could be autonomous to a future date. But they realised that even for this make-believe the co-operation of the Congress was necessary.

At the end of the first session of the Round Table Conference, efforts were again made to induce the Congress to join the Conference. The Prime Minister, in his closing speech, announcing the policy of the British Government, once more invited the Congress to co-operate. On the 25th of January, 1931, the Viceroy ordered the release of Mahatma Gandhi and other members of the Congress Working Committee to enable them to review the situation and to come to a fresh decision in regard to the Conference. As a result of long and protracted negotiations between Mahatma Gandhi, on the one side, and Lord Irwin, on the other, a pact was signed on the 5th of March between the Government and the Congress and a sort of truce was declared. The Government statement about the terms of the truce ran as follows :—

"1. Consequent on the conversations that have taken place between His Excellency the Viceroy and Mr. Gandhi, it has been arranged that the Civil Disobedience movement be discontinued, and that, with the approval of His Majesty's Government, certain action be taken by the Government of India and local Governments.

"2. As regards constitutional questions, the scope of future discussion is stated, with the assent of His Majesty's Government, to be with the object of considering further the scheme for the constitutional Government of India discussed at the Round Table Conference. Of the scheme there outlined, Federation is an essential part; so also are Indian responsibility and reservations or safeguards in the interests of India, for such matters as, for instance, defence; external affairs; the position of minorities; the financial credit of India, and the discharge of obligations.

"3. In pursuance of the statement made by the Prime Minister in his announcement of January 19, 1931, steps will be taken for the participation of the representatives of the Congress in the further discussions that are to take place on the scheme of constitutional reform.

"4. The settlement relates to activities directly connected with the Civil Disobedience movement.

"5. Civil Disobedience will be effectively discontinued and reciprocal action will be taken by Government. The effective discontinuance of the Civil Disobedience movement means the effective discontinuance of all activities in furtherance thereof, by whatever methods pursued and, in particular, the following :—

- (1) The organised defiance of the provisions of any law.
- (2) The movement for the non-payment of land revenue and other legal dues.
- (3) The publication of news-sheets in support of the Civil Disobedience movement.
- (4) Attempts to influence civil and military servants or village officials against Government or to persuade them to resign their posts.

"6. As regards the boycott of foreign goods, there are two issues involved, firstly the character of the boycott and secondly, the methods employed in giving effect to it. The position of Government is as follows. They approve of the encouragement of Indian industries as part of the economic and industrial movement designed to improve the material condition of India, and they have no desire to discourage methods of propaganda, persuasion or advertisement pursued with this object in view, which do not interfere with the freedom of action of individuals, or are not prejudicial to the maintenance of law and order. But the boycott of non-Indian goods (except of cloth which has been applied to all foreign cloth) has been directed during the Civil Disobedience movement chiefly, if not exclusively, against British goods, and in regard to these it has been admittedly employed in order to exert pressure for political ends.

"It is accepted that a boycott of this character, and organised for this purpose, will not be consistent with the participation of representatives of the Congress in a frank and friendly discussion of constitutional questions between representatives of British India, of the Indian States, and of His Majesty's Government and political parties in England, which the settlement is intended to secure. It is, therefore, agreed that the discontinuance of the Civil Disobedience movement connotes the definite discontinuance of the employment of the boycott of British commodities as a political weapon and that, in consequence, those who have given up, during a time of political excitement, the sale or purchase of British goods must be left free without any form of restraint to change their attitude if they so desire.

"7. In regard to the methods employed in furtherance of the replacement of non-Indian by Indian goods, or against the consumption of intoxicating liquor and drugs, resort will not be had to methods coming within the category of picketing, except within the limits permitted by the ordinary law. Such picketing shall be unaggressive and it shall not involve coercion,



to the public, or any offence under the ordinary law. If and when any of these methods is employed in any place, the practice of picketing in that place will be suspended.

"8. Mr. Gandhi has drawn the attention of Government to specific allegations against the conduct of the police, and represented the desirability of a public enquiry into them. In present circumstances Government see great difficulty in this course and feel that it must inevitably lead to charges and countercharges, and so militate against the re-establishment of peace. Having regard to these considerations, Mr. Gandhi agreed not to press the matter.

"9. The action that Government will take on the discontinuance of the Civil Disobedience movement is stated in the following paragraphs.

"10. Ordinances promulgated in connection with the Civil Disobedience movement will be withdrawn.

"Ordinance No. 1 of 1931 relating to the terrorist movement does not come within the scope of the provision.

"11. Notification declaring associations unlawful under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 will be withdrawn, provided that the notifications were made in connection with the Civil Disobedience movement.

"The notifications recently issued by the Burma Government under the Criminal Law Amendment Act do not come within the scope of this provision.

"12. (i) Pending prosecutions will be withdrawn if they have been filed in connection with the Civil Disobedience movement and relate to offences which do not involve violence other than technical violence, or incitement to such violence.

"(ii) The same principles will apply to proceedings under the security provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code.

"(iii) Where a local Government has moved any High Court or has initiated proceedings under the Legal

Practitioners' Act in regard to the conduct of legal practitioners in connection with the Civil Disobedience movement, it will make application to the Court concerned for permission to withdraw such proceedings, provided that the alleged conduct of the persons concerned does not relate to violence or incitement to violence.

"(iv) Prosecutions, if any, against soldiers and police involving disobedience of orders will not come within the scope of this provision.

"13. (i) Those prisoners will be released who are undergoing imprisonment in connection with the Civil Disobedience movement for offences which did not involve violence, other than technical violence, or incitement to such violence.

"(ii) If any prisoner who comes within the scope of (i) above has been also sentenced for a jail offence, not involving violence, other than technical violence, or incitement to such violence, the latter sentence also will be remitted, or if a prosecution relating to an offence of this character is pending against such a prisoner, it will be withdrawn.

"(iii) Soldiers and police convicted of offences involving disobedience of orders—in the very few cases that have occurred—will not come within the scope of the amnesty.

"14. Fines which have not been realised will be remitted. Where an order for the forfeiture of security has been made under the security provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code, and the security has not been realised, it will be similarly remitted.

"Fines which have been realised and securities forfeited and realised under any law will not be returned.

"15. Additional police imposed in connection with the Civil Disobedience movement at the expense of the inhabitants of a particular area will be withdrawn at the discretion of local Governments. Local Governments will not refund any money, not in excess of the actual cost, that has been realised, but they will remit any sum that has not been realised.

"16. (a) Movable property, which is not in illegal possession, and which has been seized in connection with the Civil Disobedience movement, under the Ordinances or the provisions of the Criminal Law, will be returned, if it is still in the possession of the Government.

"(b) Movable property, forfeited or attached in connection with the realisation of land revenue or other dues, will be returned, unless the Collector of the District has reason to believe that the defaulter will contumaciously refuse to pay the dues recoverable from him within a reasonable period. In deciding what is a reasonable period special regard will be paid to cases in which the defaulters, while willing to pay, genuinely require time for the purpose, and if necessary, the revenue will be suspended in accordance with the ordinary principles of land revenue administration.

"(c) Compensation will not be given for deterioration.

"(d) Where movable property has been sold or otherwise finally disposed of by Government, compensation will not be given and the sale proceeds will not be returned, except in so far as they are in excess of the legal dues for which the property may have been sold.

"(c) It will be open to any person to seek any legal remedy he may have on the ground that the attachment or seizure of property was not in accordance with the law.

"17. (a) Immovable property of which possession has been taken under Ordinance IX of 1930 will be returned in accordance with the provisions of the Ordinance.

"(b) Land and other immovable property in the possession of Government, which has been forfeited or attached in connection with the realisation of land revenue or other dues, will be returned unless the Collector of the district has reason to believe that the defaulter will contumaciously refuse to pay the dues recoverable from him within a reasonable period. In deciding what is a reasonable period special regard will be paid to cases in which the defaulter, while willing to pay, genuinely

requires time for the purpose, and if necessary the revenues will be suspended in accordance with the ordinary principles of land revenue administration.

"(c) Where immovable property has been sold to third parties, the transaction must be regarded as final, so far as Government are concerned.

"*Note.*—Mr. Gandhi has represented to Government that according to his information and belief some, at least, of these sales have been unlawful and unjust. Government on the information before them cannot accept this contention.

"(d) It will be open to any person to seek any legal remedy he may have on the ground that the seizure or attachment of property was not in accordance with the law.

"18. Government believe that there have been very few cases in which the realization of dues has not been made in accordance with the provisions of the law. In order to meet such cases, if any, local Governments will issue instructions to District Officers to have prompt enquiry made into any specific complaint of this nature, and to give redress without delay if illegality is established.

"19. Where the posts rendered vacant by resignations have been permanently filled, Government will not be able to reinstate the late incumbents. Other cases of resignation will be considered on their merits by local Governments who will pursue a liberal policy in regard to the reappointment of Government servants and village officials who apply for reinstatement.

"20. Government are unable to condone breaches of the existing law relating to the salt administration, nor are they able, in the present financial conditions of the country, to make substantial modifications in the Salt Acts.

"For the sake, however, of giving relief to certain of the poorer classes, they are prepared to extend their administrative provisions, on lines already prevailing in certain places, in order to permit local residents in

villages, immediately adjoining areas where salt can be collected or made, to collect or make salt for domestic consumption or sale within such villages, but not for sale to, or trading with, individuals living outside them.

21. In the event of Congress failing to give full effect to the obligations of this settlement, Government will take such action as may, in consequence, become necessary for the protection of the public and individuals and the due observance of law and order.

The reference to safeguards in para. 2 of the above terms did not satisfy many Indians. Nor were some of the Britishers satisfied that the safeguards should be only in the interests of India ; they wanted safeguards also to protect British interests. The Government took shelter behind equivocation, but Mahatma Gandhi made it clear at the Karachi Congress session that he would not be satisfied with anything less than complete Independence. The Congress confirmed the settlement arrived at by Gandhiji and resolved as follows :—

“This Congress having considered the Provisional settlement between the Working Committee and the Government of India, endorses it, and desires to make it clear that the Congress goal of Purna Swaraj (complete Independence) remains intact.

“In the event of a way remaining otherwise open to Congress to be represented at any conference with the representatives of the British Government the Congress delegates will work for this goal and in particular so as to give the nation control over the army, external affairs finance, fiscal and economic policy and to have scrutiny by an impartial tribunal of the financial transactions of the British Government in India, and to examine and assess the obligations to be undertaken by India or

England and the right to either party to end partnership at will provided, however, that the Congress delegates will be free to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interest of India.

"The Congress appoints and authorises Mahatma Gandhi to represent it at the Conference with the addition of such other delegates as the Working Committee may appoint to act under his leadership."

The settlement was a personal triumph for Gandhiji. Very few Congressmen took the terms of the Delhi Agreement at their face value; but under Gandhiji's lead they agreed to test the government's *bona fides*.

Gandhiji and the Working Committee were, however, soon disillusioned.

Soon after the pact Lord Irwin went back to England. His term of office having expired, his place was taken by Lord Willingdon, whose opposition to the Indian national aspirations was well-known. He had acted before in India as Governor of Bombay and also of Madras. During the last twenty years Bombay had not seen a more unpopular satrap.

His views about the recent national struggle preceded long before Lord Willingdon reached India from Canada, where he held the position of Governor General. He is said to have declared that had he been in Lord Irwin's place, he would have crushed the Civil Disobedience Movement with in a month, and taught Gandhi and his colleagues a lesson which they would not have easily forgotten.

Whether the above views were really of Lord Willingdon or had been imputed to him by persons not well-disposed towards him, it soon became clear after his advent in India that he was not prepared to deal with the Congress in the spirit of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The agreement arrived at between Lord Irwin and Mahatma Gandhi had its chief merit in that it was arrived at between two persons who sincerely wanted peace between England and India and were prepared to do everything in their power to secure that object. It was not so much the Pact that induced Mahatma Gandhi and his colleagues to call off the Civil Disobedience Movement as the spirit that was believed to have prompted Lord Irwin in placing his signatures to it. The Congress was assured that the Government really wanted peace and that the future would clearly show that the Government was prepared to go far beyond the Pact to conciliate Indian opinion.

With Lord Irwin's departure that personal factor which appeared, at least for the time being, to have ushered in an era of goodwill disappeared. Lord Willingdon betrayed soon after his arrival his impatience with the position that the Congress occupied under the Pact.

It is a well-known fact that many of the British officials in India did not like the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. They now got the opportunity to carry out their designs against it. Lord Irwin, its author, had gone and, under the new regime, they

were free to have it all their own way again. In almost every Province the terms of the Pact were honoured more in their breach than in their observance. Complaint after complaint reached Mahatma Gandhi from all over the country about the unfair treatment of the Congressmen by the officials. He brought these complaints to the notice of Lord Willingdon who viewed some of these complaints with suspicion and others with contempt.

Mahatma Gandhi found it increasingly difficult to deal with a new man who had not yet grasped all the implications of the Pact. He patiently worked to win over Lord Willingdon to a right understanding of the new situation that had been created by the Pact. But he tried in vain; eventually he had to tell Lord Willingdon plainly that the official hierarchy was not playing the game and that under the circumstances the Congress would be forced to regard the Pact as having come to an end.

The chief event that brought the situation to a head was the forcible realisation of land revenue from the suffering peasantry of Bardoli in opposition to the well-defined and clear undertakings of the Government in that respect. Mahatma Gandhi, along with so many other complaints, brought this flagrant breach of the terms pointedly to the notice of Lord Willingdon. But the Viceroy categorically denied the charge. Mahatma Gandhi demanded an impartial enquiry. This was also refused.

Mahatmajji argued that there were two parties to the Pact, the Government and the Congress. And



if there arose any difference of opinion between the two contracting parties as regards the interpretation of the terms or as regards the facts connected with the observance of those terms, the dispute could be settled by reference to an impartial arbitrator. Lord Willingdon would not accept this position. He virtually took up the position that the Pact was a sort of a unilateral document and that the Government was the final arbiter both as regard points of fact and of interpretation.

But as the Government in England were anxious to have Mahatma Gandhi at least once in England, Lord Willingdon had to yield, though without any grace, on the points at issue. He had to agree to an enquiry into the complaints of the Bardoli peasants and persuade Mahatma Gandhi to proceed to England.

The Bardoli Enquiry dispute showed that both sides were not satisfied with each other and could come to no heart-to-heart agreement. It was in such circumstances that Mahatma Gandhi had to sail for the London Conference on the 29th of August, 1931. According to his own words he proceeded to England hoping against hope to achieve something substantial there. The clouds were dark and the powers of reaction supreme. The only advantage seemed to be to use the opportunity to state India's case before the English people and the world in general, in a clear and authoritative manner. Such a course could prove of some help, if India was obliged to resume her constitutional fight again for her political liberty.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE SECOND CONFERENCE

**G**ANDHIJI was warmly welcomed in England. He was lionised as only a few foreigners have ever been in that country. He utilised every opportunity he got to advance the cause of the unfortunate people whose sole accredited representative he was in the land where great reputations are built and pulled down in no time. Mahatma Gandhi is a man of varied interests. He is a politician, religious reformer, social reformer, educationist, promoter of cottage industries, dietician and what not ! But in England he kept himself severely pinned down to one thing, the advocacy of the political and economic freedom of India.

Gandhiji stated the object of his mission to England in the very first speech he delivered at the Federal Structure Committee of the Round Table Conference. He said :

"I must confess at the outset that I am not a little embarrassed in having to state before you the position of the Indian National Congress. I would like to say that I have come to London to attend this sub-committee, as also the Round Table Conference, when the proper time comes, absolutely in the spirit of co-operation and to strive to my utmost to find points of agreement. I

would like also to give this assurance to His Majesty's Government, that at no stage is it, or will it be, my desire to embarrass authority; and I would like to give the same assurance to my colleagues here that however much we may differ about our view points, I shall not obstruct them in any shape or form. Therefore, my position here depends entirely upon your goodwill, as also the goodwill of His Majesty's Government. If at any time I found that I could not be of any useful service to the Conference, I would not hesitate to withdraw myself from it. I can also say to those who are responsible for the management of this Committee and the Conference that they have only to give a sign and I should have no hesitation in withdrawing.

**History of the Congress.** "I am obliged to make these remarks because I know that there are fundamental differences of opinion between the Government and the Congress, and it is possible that there are vital differences between my colleagues and myself. There is also a limitation under which I shall be working. I am but a poor humble agent acting on behalf of the Indian National Congress; and it might be as well to remind ourselves of what the Congress stands for and what it is. You will then extend your sympathy to me, because I know that the burden that rests upon my shoulders is really very great.

"The Congress is, if I am not mistaken, the oldest political organisation we have in India. It has had nearly 50 years of life, during which period it has, without any interruption, held its annual session. It is what it means—national. It represents no particular community, no particular class, no particular interest. It claims to represent all Indian interests and all classes. It is a matter of the greatest pleasure to me to state that it was first conceived in an English brain. Allan Octavius Hume we knew as the father of the Congress. It was nursed by two great Parsees, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Dadabhoj Naoroji, whom all India delighted to recognise as its Grand Old Man. From the very commencement

the Congress had Musalmans, Christians, Anglo-Indians, I might say all religions, sects, and communities represented upon it more or less fully. The late Badruddin Tyebji identified himself with the Congress. We have had Musalmans and Parsees as presidents of the Congress. I can recall at least one Indian Christian president at the present moment, W. C. Bonnerji. Kalicharan Bannerji, than whom I have not had the privilege of knowing a purer Indian, was also thoroughly identified with the Congress. I miss, as I have no doubt all of you miss, the presence in our midst of Mr. K. T. Paul. Although he never officially belonged to the Congress, he was a nationalist to the full and a sympathiser of the Congress.

"As you know, the late Maulana Muhammed Ali, whose presence also we miss to-day, was a president of the Congress, and, at present, we have four Musalmans as members of the Working Committee, which consists of 15 members. We have had women as our presidents, Dr. Annie Besant was the first, and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu followed. We have her as a member of the Working Committee also ; and so, if we have no distinctions of class or creed, we have no distinctions of sex either.

**Congress and "Untouchables".** "The Congress has from its very commencement, taken up the cause of the so-called "untouchables". There was a time when the Congress had at every annual session as its adjunct the Social Conference, to which the late Mr. Ranade had dedicated his energies, among his many activities. Headed by him, you will find in the programme of the Social Conference, reform in connection with the untouchables taking a prominent place. But in 1920, the Congress took a large step and brought the question of removal of untouchability as a plank on the political platform, made it an important item of the political programme. Just as the Congress considered Hindu-Muslim unity, thereby meaning unity amongst the people following all the great religions, so also did the Congress consider the removal of untouchability as an indispensable condition for the attainment of full freedom.

"The position the Congress took up in 1920 remains intact today and so, you will see that the Congress has attempted from its very beginning to be what it has described itself to be, namely, 'national' in every sense of the term.

"If Your Highnesses will permit me to say it, in the very early stage, the Congress took up your cause also. Let me remind this Committee that it was the Grand Old Man of India who sponsored the cause of Kashmir and Mysore, and these two great Houses, I venture, in all humility, to submit, owe not a little to the efforts of Dadabhoj Naoroji and the Congress. Even now the Congress has endeavoured to serve the Princes of India by refraining from any interference in their domestic and internal affairs.

**A Peasant Organisation.** "I hope that this brief introduction that I thought fit to give will serve to enable the sub-committee and those who are interested in the claims of the Congress, to understand that it has endeavoured to deserve the claim that it has made. It has failed, I know, often to live up to the claim, but, I venture to submit, that if you were to examine the history of the Congress you would find that it has more often succeeded, and progressively succeeded, than failed. Above all, the Congress represents, in its essence, the dumb, semi-starved millions scattered over the length and breadth of the land in its seven hundred thousand villages, no matter whether they come from what is called British India, or what is called Indian India. Every interest which, in the opinion of the Congress, is worthy of protection, has to subserve the interests of these dumb millions. You do find now and again an apparent clash between several interests. If there is a genuine and real clash, I have no hesitation in saying on behalf of the Congress that the Congress will sacrifice every interest for the sake of the interests of these dumb millions. It is therefore, essentially a peasant organisation, or, it is becoming so progressively. You, and even the Indian members of the sub-committee, will, perhaps,

be astonished to find that today the Congress, through its organisation, The All-India Spinners' Association, is finding work for nearly 50,000 women in nearly 2,000 villages, and these women, are possibly 50 per cent. Musalman women. Thousands of them belong to the so-called untouchable classes. We have thus, in this constructive manner, penetrated these villages and the effort is being made to cover every one of the 7,00,000 villages. It is a superhuman task, but if human effort can do so, you will presently find the Congress covering all of these villages and bringing to them the message of the spinning wheel.

**The Karachi Mandate.** "This being the representative character of the Congress, you will not be astonished when I read to you the Congress mandate. I hope that it may not jar upon you. You may consider that the Congress is making a claim which is wholly untenable. Such as it is, I am here to put forth that claim on behalf of the Congress in the gentlest manner possible, but also in the firmest manner possible. I have come here to prosecute that claim with all the faith and energy that I can command. If you can convince me to the contrary and show that the claim is inimical to the interests of these dumb millions, I shall revise my opinion. I am open to conviction, but even so, I should have to ask my principals to consent to that revision before I could usefully act as the agent of the Congress. At this stage, I propose to read to you this mandate so that you can understand clearly the limitations imposed upon me.

"This was a resolution passed at the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress :

"This Congress, having considered the provisional settlement between the Working Committee and the Government of India, endorses it, and desires to make it clear that the Congress goal of Purna Swaraj, meaning complete independence, remains intact. In the event of a way remaining otherwise open to the Congress to be represented at any Conference with the representatives

of the British Government, the Congress delegation will work for this goal, and in particular so as to give the nation control over the army, external affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy, and to have a scrutiny by an impartial tribunal of the financial transactions of the British Government in India to examine and assess the obligations to be undertaken by India or England and the right for either party to end the partnership at will: provided, however, that the Congress delegation will be free to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of India.'

"Then follows the appointment. I have in the light of this mandate endeavoured to study as carefully as I was capable of studying the provisional conclusions arrived at by the several sub-committees appointed by the Round Table Conference. I have also carefully studied the Prime Minister's statement giving the considered policy of His Majesty's Government. I speak subject to correction, but so far as I have been able to understand, this document falls short of what is aimed at and claimed by the Congress. True, I have the liberty to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably in the interests of India, but they have all to be consistent with the fundamentals stated in this mandate.

"I remind myself at this stage of the terms of what is to me a sacred Settlement, the Settlement arrived at Delhi between the Government of India and the Congress. In that settlement, the Congress has accepted the principle of federation; the principle that there should be responsibility at the centre, and has accepted also the principle that there should be safeguards in so far as they may be necessary in the interests of India.

**Aspire to be a partner.** "There was one phrase used yesterday, I forget by which delegate, but it struck me very forcibly. He said, "We do not want a merely political constitution." I do not know that he gave that expression the same meaning that it immediately bore to me: but I immediately said to myself, this phrase has

given me a good expression. It is true the Congress will not be, and personally speaking, I myself would never be, satisfied with a mere political constitution which to read would seem to give India all she can possibly politically desire, but in reality would give her nothing. If we are intent upon complete independence it is not from any sense of arrogance; it is not because we want to parade before the universe that we have now severed all connection with the British people. Nothing of the kind. On the contrary, you find in this mandate itself that the Congress contemplates a partnership; the Congress contemplates a connection with the British people, but that connection should be such as can exist between two absolute equals. Time was when I prided myself on being, and being called, a British subject. I have ceased for many years to call myself a British subject. I would far rather be called a rebel than a subject; but I have now aspired, I still aspire, to be a citizen not in the Empire, but in a Commonwealth, in a partnership if possible; if God wills it, an indissoluble partnership, but not a partnership superimposed upon one nation by another. Hence, you find here that the Congress claims that either party should have the right to sever this connection, to dissolve the partnership. May I say—it may be irrelevant to the consideration, but not irrelevant to me,—that as I have said elsewhere, I can quite understand responsible British statesmen today being wholly engrossed in domestic affairs, in trying to make both ends meet. We could not expect them to do anything less, and I felt, even as I was sailing towards London, whether we, in the sub-committee at the present moment, would not be a drag upon the British ministers, whether we would not be interlopers. And yet, I said to myself, it is possible that the British ministers themselves might consider the proceedings of the Round Table Conference to be of primary importance even in terms of their domestic affairs. Yes, India can be held by the sword. But what will conduce to the prosperity of Great Britain, and the economic freedom of Great



Britain : an enslaved but a rebellious India, or an India, an esteemed partner with Britain to share her sorrows, to take part side by side with Britain in her misfortunes ?

**His dream of hope.** "Yes, if need be, but at her own will, to fight side by side with Britain, not for the exploitation of a single race or a single human being on earth, but it may be conceivably for the good of the whole world. If I want freedom for my country, believe me, if I can possibly help it, I do not want that freedom in order that I, belonging to a nation which counts one-fifth of the human race, may exploit any other race upon earth, or any single individual. If I want that freedom for my country, I would not be deserving of that freedom if I did not cherish and treasure the equal right of every other race, weak or strong, to the same freedom. And so I said to myself, whilst I was nearing the shores of your beautiful island that, perchance it might be possible for me to convince the British ministers that India as a valuable partner, not held by force but by the silken cord of love, an India of that character might be conceivably of real assistance to you in balancing your budget, not for one year but for many years. What cannot the two nations do—one a handful but brave, with a record for bravery perhaps unsurpassed, a nation noted for having fought slavery, a nation that has at least claimed times without number to protect the weak—and another a very ancient nation, counted in millions, with a glorious and ancient past, representing at the present moment two great cultures, the Islam and Hindu cultures and if you will, also containing not a small but a very large Christian population, and certainly absorbing the whole of the splendid Zoroastrian stock, in numbers almost beneath contempt, but in philanthropy and enterprise almost unequalled, certainly unsurpassed. We have got all these cultures concentrated in India, and supposing that God fires both Hindus and Musalmans represented here with a proper spirit so that they close ranks and come to an honourable understanding, take that

nation and this nation together, I again ask myself and ask you whether with an India free, completely independent as Great Britain is, an honourable partnership between these two nations cannot be mutually beneficial; even in terms of the domestic affair of this great nation. And so, in that dreamy hope I have approached the British Isles, and I shall still cherish that dream.

"And when I have said this perhaps I have said all, and you will be able to dot the I's, and cross the T's, not expecting me to fill in all the details, and tell you what I mean by control over external affairs, finances, fiscal and economic policy, or even the financial transactions which a friend yesterday considered to be sacrosanct. I do not take that view. If there is a stock-taking between incoming and outgoing partners, their transactions are subject to audit and adjustment, and the Congress will not be guilty of any dishonourable conduct or crime in saying that the nation should understand what it is taking over and what it should not take over. This audit, this scrutiny, is asked for not merely in the interests of India; it is asked for in the interests of both. I am positive that the British people do not want to saddle upon India a single burden which it should not legitimately bear, and I am here to declare on behalf of the Congress that the Congress will never think of repudiating a single claim or a burden that it should justly discharge. If we are to live as an honourable nation worthy of commanding credit from the whole world, we will pay every farthing of legitimate debt with our blood.

"I do not think I should take you any further through the clauses of this mandate and analyse for you the meaning of these clauses as Congressmen give them. If it is God's will that I should continue to take part in these deliberations, as the deliberations proceed I shall be able to explain the implications of these clauses. As the deliberations proceed I would have my say in connection with the safeguards also. But, I think, I

have said quite enough in having, with some elaboration and with your generous indulgence, Lord Chancellor, taken the time of this meeting. I had not intended really to take that time but I felt that I could not possibly do justice to the cause I have come to expound to you, the sub-committee, and to the British nation of which we the Indian delegation are at present, the guests, if I did not give you, out of the whole of my heart my cherished wish even at this time. I would love to go away from the shores of the British Isles with the conviction that there was to be an honourable and equal partnership between Great Britain and India.

"I cannot do anything more than say that it will be my fervent prayer during all the days that I live in your midst that this consummation may be reached. I thank you, Lord Chancellor, for the courtesy that you have extended to me in not stopping me, although I have taken close upon forty-five minutes. I was not entitled to all that indulgence and I thank you once more."

During his stay in England for about two months, Mahatmaji had to speak several times daily, both at the Round Table Conference and outside it. As an earnest devotee to the cause he had agreed to advocate he stood firm like a rock. Many direct and indirect efforts were made to dislodge him from this invulnerable position but without any result. The more he was pressed the more firm and clear-cut became his advocacy of the position he held.

But the atmosphere in England was not favourable to Gandhiji's demands. It was

doubtful even if the Labour Government, had it remained in power, would have satisfied the Indian aspirations to the full. Still there was some hope that it would have tried to meet the Indian demand half-way. But due to the unexpected political somersault by some of the most prominent Labour leaders, in the very midst of the Round Table Conference, the Labour Government was overthrown, and its place was taken by Tories who, with the help of a few deserters from Labour and Liberal ranks, styled themselves as the National Government of England. The British Capitalists were running bankrupt and the new Government was the window dressing with which they wanted to bluff the world, specially America, of their solvency.

The change had a disastrous effect as regards the Round Table Conference. The attitude of the British delegates was completely changed; the representatives having sympathy with the Indian aspirations were pushed back and the reactionaries, well known for their hostility to Indian advancement, emerged into prominence.

The old game was resumed. The Conference was called to settle the differences between England and India ; but by moves behind the scenes it was turned into a cockpit of Hindu-Muslim disputes. The quarrel that was between the two nations was represented to the world as the difference of two major Indian communities. The real

question was side-tracked, and in order to discredit Indian demands, many a minor question was brought into the lime-light. England from the position of a party in dispute, or rather from the position of a defendant, appropriated to itself the position of an arbitrator and a showman.

Much of this game was foreseen by Mahatmaji when he was in India. He had declared more than once that it would not serve any useful purpose to go to England unless communal differences were settled. But it was also known that as long as there were people who flourished because of these communal differences, there was not any hope of these differences ever coming to an end. Mahatmaji was, therefore, pressed hard to at least once attend the Conference to see how matters really stood. Against his best judgment, he agreed to go to England. If nothing else, the trip to Europe would serve, he thought, a useful purpose in acquainting the British people with the Indian position.

Except Mahatmaji, not a single other member in the Round Table Conference was elected by any Indian organization to represent it. Most of those who were invited by the Government were well known for their reactionary views ; they could easily be used as convenient tools by those who could pay for them. Such Hindus and Muslims as were directly responsible for much of the communal strife in India were there in abundance. But when efforts were made to have persons

in the Conference who could view the communal differences in a reasonable manner, Government turned down all such proposals. Though Mahatmaji tried hard, and Lord Irwin had already agreed to invite men like Dr. Ansari, not a single Muslim Nationalist in touch with national politics was invited to the Conference.

It became soon evident that there was much in what Mahatmaji had said when he expressed his unwillingness to join the Conference unless the communal differences were settled. But unsuspectingly he let himself into the trap that had been laid for him. Later on Mahatmaji had to declare that the Conference was not the proper body competent to settle the communal question. The Conference was composed mostly of men who engendered communal differences and lived and prospered by them. Mahatmaji ought to have kept himself aloof from all discussion of the communal questions with such people. But he was manoeuvred into the maze and left there in a miserable plight. From the position of a sole representative of all the Indian Nationalists—Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, Jews and the so-called Depressed classes—he was cleverly exhibited to the world as representing the cause of a grasping Hindu majority which was unwilling to do justice to Moslems and other minorities.

It is true that Gandhiji soon after the discussions that went on almost endlessly in connection

with the settlement of the communal questions, tried to expose the whole show, but it was too late ; some of the mud that was mischievously thrown at him could not be removed even after much washing.

It is sometimes said that had Gandhiji taken with him some of the Moselms as members of the Congress delegation, his opponents would not have been able to put him in as isolated a position as they actually did. The criticism is of the type which people who get wiser after the event make. Gandhiji had expected, and he was given to understand by no less a person than Lord Irwin, that the Government would invite Moslem Nationalists in their own right. If later on the Government changed its mind, it was due to no fault of Mahatmaji. The change of Government in England, and with it the change of Government policy towards India, could not be foreseen at the time when the Congress came to the decision to send Gandhiji as their sole representative and spokesman.

With the advent of the "National" Government Sir Samuel Hoare, the new Secretary of State for India, assumed the most important position in the British delegation. He wanted to go no farther than the Simon Report, that is, partial responsibility in the Provinces and complete irresponsibility at the Centre. He flattered, cajoled and threatened to win over Gandhiji to this position. But as a faithful advocate, Gandhiji was found unyielding and even

uncompromising over the main issue. Thereupon the reactionaries set themselves in right earnest to discredit Gandhiji. An alliance was formed of some of the delegates nominated by the Viceroy as representing Moslems, Christians, and the Depressed Classes. The understanding arrived at by these people was called the Minorities Pact. It was boomed widely by every British reactionary, from the Prime Minister down to the meanest gutter newspaper, as a glorious document defending the British supremacy against the demands of Indian Nationalism.

The Minorities Pact was nothing more than an unholy alliance of the British and the Muslim communalists. The Depressed Classes and the Christians were overwhelmingly against it. The Sikhs and Parsis were not consulted at all, nor the Muslim Nationalists. But the purpose that lay behind the Pact was very deep. From Mahatmaji's attitude, the new "Tory" clique in England had seen that it could not win over India to perpetual serfdom. National forces in this Eastern possession of the descendants of Clive and Hastings had grown strong and required to be fought down with new weapons. Moslem Communalists were, therefore, promised *baksheesh* and bought over to fight against the progressive elements in the country.

Much light was thrown on these shady and shameful transactions by a "Very private and Confidential" circular issued by "Loyalists"



containing the views of Mr. Benthall who attended the Conference as a representative of the British interests in India. The following are some of the extracts from this extraordinary document :—

“ We went to London determined to achieve some settlement if we could, but our determination in that regard was tempered with an equal determination that there should be no giving way on any essential part of the policy agreed to by the (European) Associated Chambers of Commerce in regard to financial and commercial safeguards, and by the European Association on general policy. It was obvious to us, and we had it in mind throughout the Conference that the united forces of the Congress, the Hindu Sabha and the (Indian) Federated Chambers of Commerce would be directed towards whittling down the safeguards already proposed.....

“ If you look at the results of this last session you will see that Gandhi and the (Indian) Federated Chambers are unable to point to a single concession wrung from the British Government as the result of their visit to St. James Place. He landed in India with empty hands.

“ There was another incident too, which did him no good. He undertook to settle the communal problem and failed before all the world.....

“ The Muslims were a solid and enthusiastic team: Ali Imam, the Nationalist Muslim, caused no division. They played their cards with great skill throughout; they promised us support and they gave it in full measure. In return they asked us that we should not forget their economic plight in Bengal and we should 'without pampering them' do what we can to find places for them in European firms so that they may have a chance to improve their material position and the general standing of their community.

" On the whole, there was one policy of the British Nation and the British Community in India and that was to make up our minds on a national policy and to stick to it. *But after the general elections the right wing of the Government made up its mind to break up the Conference and to fight the Congress.* The Muslims, who do not want responsibility at the Centre, were delighted. Government undoubtedly changed their policy and tried to get away with Provincial Autonomy with a promise of Central Reforms. We had made up our minds that the fight with the Congress was inevitable ; we felt and said that sooner it came the better, but we made up our minds that for a crushing success we should have all possible friends on our side. The Muslims were alright : the Minorities Pact and Government's general attitude ensured that. So were the princes and the Minorities.

" The important thing to us seemed to be to carry the Hindu in the street as represented by such people as Sapru, Jayakar, Patro and others. If we could not get them to fight Congress, we could at least ensure that they would not back Congress, and that by one simple method of leaving no doubt in their minds that there was to be no going back on the Federal Scheme which broadly was also the accepted policy of the European Community, and we acted accordingly. We pressed upon the Government that the one substantial earnest of good faith which would satisfy these people was to bring in the Provincial and Central Constitutions in one place. Provincial Autonomy could not be forced upon India, the Muslims alone could not work it. Congress Provinces facing a bitter centre present grave political difficulties, each Province would be Calcutta Corporation on its own. So we joined with strange companions : Government saw the arguments and the Conference instead of breaking up in disorder with 100 per cent. of Hindu political India against us, ended in promises of co-operation by 99 per cent. of the Conference, including even such people as Malaviya, while Gandhi himself was indisposed to join the Standing Committee.....

"The Muslims have become firm allies of the Europeans. They are very satisfied with their own position and are prepared to work with us.

"It must not, however, be supposed that when we agree that reforms are necessary, we advocate democratic reform in every province. All that we mean is such change in the system of Government as will improve its efficiency."

These extracts sufficiently show how the Tory Government and its allies worked to defeat the object of the declaration that the Labour Government had made promising to concede to India her due. But it would be wrong to believe that the pact between the Moslem reactionaries who were prepared to sell their country for a mess of pottage,\* and the British reactionaries who wanted to keep Indians down for ever, was an impromptu performance. The foundations for it were laid in India and England long before the second session of the Conference. In fact when Gandhiji and Lord Irwin came to an understanding between themselves those of the reactionary elements in India which did not like this alliance, immediately gathered forces and organized themselves into a united force to defeat the Indian Nationalists.

It was in Simla, at the headquarters of the Indian Government, that a part of this conspiracy

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\* The recent revelations in the Indian Legislative Assembly about the demand of Sir Agha Khan to be made a ruling prince of some territory in India as a reward for his services in the Round Table Conference throw much lurid light on these transactions.

against the Indian people was hatched. The reactionaries were upset by the prestige which the Congress had acquired by the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. They, therefore, took the Muslim reactionaries and some of the Indian Princes into their confidence and offered to support their sectional demands, provided they could in return agree to support them in turning down the Indian national demands *vis-a-vis* the Britishers and the bureaucracy.

Amongst the Moslems who led this movement was Sir Fazli Hussain. His exploits in this direction were already well known. A renegade from the Congress, he owed his position in the Government circles to his anti-national views. Amongst the British officials the most important part was played by the Punjab and the U.P. civilians in touch with the Government of India.\* The Maharaja of Patiala represented the Indian Princes who agreed to work with this group.

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\*Even when the negotiations for a truce were going on between Gandhiji and Lord Irwin, representatives of this group tried their best to thwart the negotiations. But they could not succeed as the Labour Government was anxious to conciliate the Congress and Lord Irwin was himself desirous to adhere to that policy loyally. The draft of truce terms as originally drawn up by the representatives of the bureaucracy in Viceroy's Secretariate was so uncompromising that when the Viceroy's attention was drawn to the mischievous enormity of some of the terms, His Excellency had to apologetically withdraw that draft and order for the drawing up of quite a new set of terms fundamentally different from the first draft.

Owing to the influence of the Nawab of Bhopal with all the Moslem sections, at one time it was hoped that it would be possible to bring Moslem Nationalists and Communalists on one platform to help the advance of the country. After some preliminary pourparlers at Bhopal, the final meeting was held in May, 1931, at Simla. All the Moslem sections had agreed to a common national formula, but the Simla influences proved too strong for such a consummation. Sir Fazli Hussain stepped into the forum quite openly, and with the help of Patiala and some Indian officials, wrecked all efforts at conciliation. This move formally confirmed the tripartite alliance between the reactionary bureaucrats, suborned Moslems and disreputable Princes.

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## CHAPTER XXII

### THE INDIAN PRINCES

**I**T is interesting to note here how some of the Indian Princes were roped in to form the unholy alliance of which mention has been made in the last chapter.

It was due to the bold and patriotic lead given by the Maharaja of Bikaner at the first Round Table Conference that the idea of a Federated India became a question of practical politics. The British delegates at the Conference also agreed to Central Responsibility because of the Federation of Indian States with the Indian Provinces. They thought that the Indian Princes would act as a brake against the Indian progressive movement and the British could rely on their support whenever there was any dispute between the Indians and the British.

But the reactionary elements in India and England were dead against any responsibility at the Centre. The only way now left open to them to achieve their object was to torpedo the very idea of Federation or turn the Federation into a body without a soul. Some of the Indian Princes, owing to misrule in their own states and personal extravagance leading to oppression of their subjects, were very unpopular in their territories and even outside in India in general. The Maharaja of Patiala was the leader of this illustrious band. These gentlemen

held, a very precarious position ; they were always in terror of the Political Department of the Government of India ; any one of them could be easily deposed any moment, and with good reasons for that.

Happily for them, some of the big wigs in the Delhi Secretariate were more inclined to thwart Indian aspirations towards national self-determination than punish the delinquents amongst the Indian Princes. These officials allied themselves with the reactionary groups in India and co-opted the discredited Indian Princes to support the anti-national movement.

Owing to the disreputable atmosphere that surrounded Patiala's personality he was ousted by Bhopal from the Chancellorship of the Princes Chamber. Not only that; the Government of India was forced to hold an enquiry into his conduct against his own subjects. The character of the enquiry was a tainted one and the public did not take any part in it. The report of the Commissioner, whose sympathy with the Maharaja was well known, was so fishy that the Government of India dare not publish it. It, however, served the only purpose of making the Maharaja and the princes of his breed ready cats-paws in the hands of those of the officials who did not wish well to India.

Bhopal, Bikaner, Mysore, Baroda, and other enlightened Indian Princes desired to help India to achieve the position of a self-respecting country. The reactionary group amongst the officials used Patiala and other persons of that type to defeat this object. Just as efforts were successfully made to

embroil Moslems with the Hindus, the Princes with shady reputations were set against the progressive group amongst their own order.

The services of an important official of the Foreign Department were secured to do propaganda work for the reactionary school of Indian Princes. Statements believed to have been manufactured in Simla were issued in the name of the Maharaja of Patiala throwing over-board almost all what the Princes had agreed to at the first Round Table Conference, and the question of Federation was turned into a bone of contention to set the Indian Princes to fight about it.

While formerly the Princes were united, now there were two parties amongst them as regards the advance which India was to make as a result of the Round Table Conference. The progressive group was led by Bhopal and the other group by Patiala. The Nawab of Bhopal had replaced Patiala as the Chancellor of the Princes Chamber. This gave him an advantage which the Simla clique did not like. At the next election of the Chamber, certain officials of the Political Department actively canvassed for Patiala and against Bhopal. Still they were not sure of their success; some of the important Indian Princes stood by Bhopal even against the wishes of reactionary bureaucrats and would not allow Patiala to succeed him as Chancellor of the Princes' Chamber. These efforts resulted in a compromise which brought about the election of Jamnagar



as the Chancellor. He was safer than Bhopal because he owed his position as the ruler of Jamnagar to the good offices of English "Friends".

The Jam Sahib came to the rescue of the reactionaries a little later than the second session of the Round Table Conference. At the second session the Princes were led by Bhopal though the representatives of the Patiala group were there to oppose him in every progressive move. The Maharaja of Patiala also tried to go to the Second Round Table Conference as a leader of the Sikhs. Much money was spent to win over some of the Sikh leaders ; but the responsible men amongst them saw through the trick and the Maharaja was disowned.

Later on even Jamnagar turned round those who wanted to make him a mere tool in the game. He openly condemned those who wanted the Indian Princes to serve as mere pawns in thwarting the national demand. He was asked to shut up by Lord Willingdon when he was giving vent to his views in the Princes' Chamber. A few days later the poor man died of heart failure. Patiala was now successfully installed as Chancellor; no one could dare vote against him when influential officials wanted only a 'safe' man as the leader of the Princes.

That the reactionary among bureaucrats desired to strengthen their hands by making the Indian rulers their abject tools was further proved by the fact that during the last ten years several important Indian States were put under the direct control of the British

officials. The Princes were relegated to a minor position in their own homes, and the powers of government in the States were gradually put in the hands of British ministers who in all important matters followed the dictates of the Delhi Foreign Office.

Hyderabad, Patiala, Bharatpur, Kashmere, Nabha, Alwar, Indore, Jind, Bikaner, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jamnagar, Rampur—all were presented by the Government of India with clever officials to “help” the Princes to properly look after their affairs. Most of this plethora of solicitation for the welfare of the Indian Princes and their territories dates back to the time since the idea of ruling India indirectly through Indian States cropped up in the brain of the reactionary group.

But this can not go on for ever. Indian Princes, though many of them are extravagant in their habits and extremely lax in morals, are an intelligent lot. They are also very proud of the position of their houses. The treatment meted out to some of them recently has left very rude scars on their minds. It is true there are traitors amongst them, but majority of them are anything but satisfied with their lot. A noted Moslem ruler, when trying to get rectified the wrong done to him as regards the forced lease of an important portion of his territory, is said to have once remarked that he must see the thing through: he must either be treated as Nepal or as Nabha, as an independent prince or as a prisoner. Most of the Indian Princes are thus shaking with bundles of grievances in their attache cases. They know their

helplessness. They are biding their time. The first opportunity they get to assert their independence of the Foreign Department, they will make a good use of it. They will side more with the Indians than with the class of officials whom they hate. They cannot forget the treatment meted out to Nabha, Bharatpur, Dewas, and Alwar.

We had to digress here a little but it was necessary in order to set in a true perspective the attitude of the Indian Princes towards the national aspirations of the country. Both in India and in England it is customary to run down the Indian Princes without any discrimination. Whatever their other faults, and their list is not very small, it is only proper that we do not confound the good with the bad at least as regards their sympathy with Indian Nationalism.\*

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\*Those very Princes who were in the beginning so enthusiastic about the idea of Federation, after seeing that the Federation is to be only a fake or at the most a reactionary amalgam of heterogeneous elements, have become very reluctant to support it. The following note from a recent article in the *Morning Post*, London, throws an interesting light on this aspect of the question :—

Official propaganda in India now centres in setting one Prince against another, in weakening the Chamber of Princes by encouraging disaffections within it, and in the personal appeals of the Viceroy to the Princes.

These appeals, it is stated on reliable authority, run on the following lines. Whether Federation is desirable or not, it has been accepted, and it is now too late to go back on it: this is the last great office he (the Viceroy) can hold in his old age, and the only satisfaction he can now have is to see that during the term of office the White Paper scheme is enacted.

If now the Princes reject Federation, his one last ambition in the evening of his life would be thwarted. For his sake Princes should support the Federal scheme.

When the Viceroy, with his courtly personality, make a sentimental appeal of this kind, there can hardly be a Prince courageous enough to say "No."

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE WAR CLOUDS

**M**AHATMAJI went to the Round Table Conference to turn the truce between England and India into a permanent settlement. But as already shown the atmosphere there was far from what he had expected. On one side the British Ministers threatened him with dire consequences if he did not co-operate with them on their own terms ; on the other he was stabbed in the back by the British hirelings amongst his own countrymen. Men like Ghaznavi and Ambedhkar who had absolutely no position in the country vied with each other to insult Mahatmaji, and that too in a manner which no gentleman would care to adopt. British Officials were not so mean or discourteous. But from the King and the Prime Minister down to the pettiest official who had access to the St. James Palace, every one was intent upon demonstrating to Mahatmaji the might of the British Government and that how easy it was for them to crush the Indian Nationalists if they again thought of raising their heads.

Gandhiji did not lose his courage nor his patience. He did not swerve an inch from the object to attain which he was deputed by the Indian

nation. Below we give in full the last important speech he delivered at the Round Table Conference. The speech is significant not only because it shows with what narrow mindedness the British statesmen and their supporters looked at the Indian problem but also because it throws a flood of light on the events that followed in India after the failure of the Conference. Mahatmaji said :—

“ I do not think that anything that I can say this evening can possibly influence the decision of the Cabinet. Probably the decision has been already taken. Matters of liberty of practically a whole Continent can hardly be decided by mere argumentation, or even negotiation. Negotiation has its purpose and has its play, but only under certain conditions. Without those conditions negotiations are a fruitless task. But I do not want to go into all these matters. I want as far as possible to confine myself within the four corners of the conditions that you, Prime Minister, read to this Conference at its opening meeting. I would, therefore, first of all say a few words in connection with the Reports that have been submitted to this Conference. You will find in these Reports that generally it has been stated that so and so is the opinion of a large majority, some, however, has expressed an opinion to the contrary, and so on. Parties who have dissented have not been stated. I had heard when I was in India, and I was told when I came here, that no decision or decisions will be taken by the ordinary rule of majority, and I do not want to mention this fact here by way of complaint that the Reports have been so framed as if the proceedings were governed by the test of majority.

“ But it was necessary for me to mention this fact, because to most of these reports you will find that there is a dissenting opinion, and in most of the cases that

dissent unfortunately happens to belong to me. It was not a matter of joy to have to dissent from fellow delegates. But I felt that I could not truly represent the Congress unless I notified that dissent.

"There is another thing which I want to bring to the notice of this Conference, namely, what is the meaning of the dissent of the Congress? I said at one of the preliminary meetings of the Federal Structure Committee that the Congress claimed to represent over 85 per cent. of the population of India, that is to say the dumb, toiling, semi-starved millions. But I went further: that the Congress claimed also, by right of service, to represent even the Princes, if they would pardon my putting forth that claim, and the landed gentry, and the educated class. I wish to repeat that claim and I wish this evening to emphasise that claim.

**Congress represents India.** "All the other Parties at this meeting represent sectional interests. Congress alone claims to represent the whole of India and all interests. It is no communal organisation; it is a determined enemy of communalism in any shape or form. Congress knows no distinction of race, colour or creed; its platform is universal. It may not always have lived up to the creed. I do not know a single human organisation that lives up to its creed. Congress has failed very often to my knowledge. It may have failed more often to the knowledge of its critics. But the worst critic will have to recognise, as it has been recognised, that the Indian National Congress is a daily growing organisation, that its message penetrates the remotest village of India, that on given occasions the Congress has been able to demonstrate its influence over and among these masses who inhabit its 7,00,000 villages.

And yet, here I see that the Congress is treated as one of the Parties. I do not mind it; I do not regard it a calamity for the Congress; but I do regard it as a calamity for the purpose of doing the work for which we have gathered together here. I wish I could convince all the British public men, the British Ministers, that

the Congress is capable of delivering the goods. The Congress is the only all-India wide national organisation, bereft of any communal bias ; that it does represent all minorities which have lodged their claim here and which, or the signatories on their behalf, claim—I hold unjustifiably—to represent 46 per cent. of the population of India. The Congress, I say, claims to represent all these minorities.

**You distrust Congress.** " What a great difference it would be today if this claim on behalf of the Congress was recognised. I feel that I have to state this claim with some degree of emphasis on behalf of peace, for the sake of achieving the purpose which is common to all of us, to you Englishmen who sit at this Table, and to us the Indian men and women who also sit at this Table. I say so for this reason : Congress is a powerful organisation ; Congress is an organisation which has been accused of running or desiring to run a parallel Government ; and in a way I have endorsed the charge. If you could understand the working of the Congress you would welcome an organisation which could run a parallel Government and show that it is possible for an organisation, voluntarily, without any force at its command, to run the machinery of Government even under adverse circumstances.

" But no. Although you have invited the Congress you distrust the Congress. Although you have invited the Congress, you reject its claim to represent the whole of India. Of course it is possible at this end of the world to dispute that claim, and it is not possible for me to prove this claim : but, all the same, if you find me asserting that claim, I do so because a tremendous responsibility rests upon my shoulders.

" The Congress represents the spirit of rebellion. I know that the word ' rebellion ' must not be whispered at a Conference which has been summoned in order to arrive at an agreed solution of India's troubles through negotiation. Speaker after speaker has got up and said that India should achieve her liberty through negotiation,

by argument, and that it will be the greatest glory of Great Britain if Great Britain yields to India's demands by argument. But the Congress does not hold quite that view. The Congress has an alternative which is unpleasant to you.

**The old way.** "I heard several speakers—I have tried to follow every speaker with the utmost attention and with all the respect that I could possibly give to these speakers—saying what a dire calamity it would be if India was fired with the spirit of lawlessness, rebellion, terrorism and so on. I do not pretend to have read history, but as a schoolboy I had to pass a paper in history also and I read that the page of history is soiled red with the blood of those who have fought for freedom. I do not know an instance in which nations have attained their own without having to go through an incredible measure of travail. The dagger of the assassin, the poison bowl, the bullet of the rifleman, the spear and all these weapons and methods of destruction have been up to now used by, what I consider, blind lovers of liberty and freedom. And the historian has not condemned him. I hold no brief for the terrorists. Mr. Ghuznavi brought in the terrorist and he brought in the Calcutta Corporation. I felt hurt when he mentioned an incident that took place at the Calcutta Corporation. He forgot to mention that the Mayor of that Corporation made handsome reparation for the error into which he himself was betrayed, and the error into which the Calcutta Corporation was betrayed, through the instrumentality of those members of the Corporation who were Congressmen.

"I hold no brief for Congressmen who directly or indirectly would encourage terrorism. As soon as this incident was brought to the notice of the Congress the Congress set about putting it in order. It immediately called upon the Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation to give an account of what was done and the Mayor, the gentleman that he is, immediately admitted his mistake and made all the reparation that it was then legally



possible to make. I must not detain this assembly over this incident for any length of time. He mentioned also a verse which the children of the forty schools conducted by the Calcutta Corporation are supposed to have recited. There were many other mis-statements in that speech which I could dwell upon, but I have no desire to do so. It is only out of regard for the great Calcutta Corporation, and out of regard for truth, and on behalf of those who are not here to-night to put in their defence, that I mention these two glaring instances. I do not for one moment believe that this was taught in the Calcutta Corporation school with the knowledge of the Calcutta Corporation. I do know that in those terrible days of last year several things were done for which we have regret, for which we have made reparation.

"If our boys in Calcutta were taught those verses which Mr. Ghuznavi has recited, I am here to tender an apology on their behalf, but I should want it proved that the boys were taught by the school-masters of these schools with the knowledge and encouragement of the Corporation. Charges of this nature have been brought against Congress times without number, and times without number these charges have also been refuted, but I have mentioned these things at this juncture. It is again to show that for the sake of liberty people have fought, people have lost their lives, people have killed and have sought death at the hands of those whom they have sought to oust.

**The new way.** "The Congress then comes upon the scene and devises a new method not known to history, namely, that of Civil Disobedience, and the Congress has been following up that method. But again, I am up against a stone wall and I am told that that is a method that no Government in the world will tolerate. Well, of course, the Government may not tolerate, no Government has tolerated, open rebellion. No Government may tolerate Civil Disobedience, but Governments have to succumb even to these forces, as the British

Government has done before now, even as the great Dutch Government after eight years of trial had to yield to the logic of facts. General Smuts, a brave General, a great statesman, and a very hard task-master also, but he himself recoiled with horror from even the contemplation of doing to death innocent men and women who were merely fighting for the preservation of their self-respect. Things which he had vowed he would never yield in the year 1908, reinforced as he was by General Botha, he had to do in year 1914, after having tried these civil resisters through and through. And in India, Lord Chelmsford had to do the same thing in Borsad and Bardoli. I suggest to you, Prime Minister, it is too late today to resist this, and it is this thing which weighs me down, this choice that lies before them, the parting of the ways probably. I shall hope against hope, I shall strain every nerve to achieve an honourable settlement for my country, if I can do so without having to put the millions of my countrymen and countrywomen and even children through the ordeal of fire. It can be a matter of no joy and comfort to me to lead them again to a fight of that character, but, if a further ordeal of fire has to be our lot, I shall approach that with the greatest joy and with the greatest consolation that I was doing what I felt to be right, the country was doing what it felt to be right, and the country will have the additional satisfaction of knowing that it was not at least taking lives, it was giving lives: it was not making the British people directly suffer, it was suffering. Professor Gilbert Murray told me—I shall never forget that, I am paraphrasing his inimitable language—‘Do you not consider for one moment that we Englishmen do not suffer when thousands of your countrymen suffer, that we are so heartless?’ I do not think so. I do know that you will suffer; but I want you to suffer because I want to touch your hearts; and when your hearts have been touched then will come the psychological moment for negotiation. Negotiation there always will be; and if this time I have travelled all these miles in order

to enter upon negotiation I thought that your countryman, Lord Irwin, had sufficiently tried us through his ordinances, that he had sufficient evidence that thousands of men and women of India and thousands of children had suffered ; and that, ordinance or no ordinance , *lathis* or no *lathis*, nothing would avail to stem the tide that was onrushing and to stem the passions that were rising in the breasts of the men and women of India who were thirsting for liberty.

**The price.** " Whilst there is yet a little sand left in the glass, I want you to understand what this Congress stands for. My life is at your disposal. The lives of all the members of the Working Committee, the All-India Congress Committee, are at your disposal. But remember that you have at your disposal the lives of all these dumb millions. I do not want to sacrifice those lives if I can possibly help it. Therefore, please remember, that I will count no sacrifice too great if, by chance, I can pull through an honourable settlement. You will find me always having the greatest spirit of compromise if I can but fire you with the spirit that is working in the Congress, namely, that India must have real liberty. Call it by any name you like ; a rose will smell as sweet by any other name, but it must be the rose of liberty that I want and not the artificial product. If your mind and the Congress mind, the mind of this Conference and the mind of the British people, means the same thing by the same word, then you will find the amplest room for compromise, and you will find the Congress itself always in a compromising spirit. But so long as there is not that one definition, not one implication for the same word that you and I may be using so long there is no compromise possible. How can there be any compromise so long as we each one of us has a different definition for the same words that we may be using. It is impossible, Prime Minister, I want to suggest to you in all humility that it is utterly impossible then to find a meeting ground, to find a ground where you can apply the spirit of compromise. And I am

very grieved to have to say upto now I have not been able to discover a common definition for the terms that we have been exchanging during all these weary weeks.

**Our goal.** "I was shown last week the Statute of Westminster by a sceptic, and he said, have you seen the definition of Dominion? I read the definition of 'Dominion' and naturally I was not at all perplexed or shocked to see that the word 'Dominion' was exhaustively defined and it had not a general definition but a particular definition. It simply said: the word "Dominion" shall include Australia, South Africa, Canada and so on ending with the Irish Free State. I do not think I noticed Egypt there. Then he said 'Do you see what your Dominion means?' It did not make any impression upon me. I do not mind what my Dominion means or what complete independence means. In a way I was relieved.

"I said, I am now relieved from having to quarrel about the word 'Dominion'; because I am out of it. But I want complete independence, and even so, so many Englishmen have said, 'Yes, you can have complete independence, but what is the meaning of complete independence?', and again we come to different definitions.

"One of your great statesmen, was debating with me, and, said, 'Honestly I did not know that you meant this by complete independence.' He ought to know but he did not know, and I shall tell you what he did not know. When I said to him, 'I cannot be a partner in an Empire,' he said, "Of course, that is logical.' I replied: 'But I want to become that. It is not as if I shall be if I am compelled to, but I want to become a partner with Great Britain. I want to enjoy precisely the same liberty that your people enjoy, and I want to seek this partnership not merely for the benefit of India, and not merely for mutual benefit; I want to seek this partnership in order that the great weight that is crushing the world to atoms may be lifted from its shoulders.'

" This took place ten or twelve days ago. Strange as it may appear, I got a note from another Englishman whom also you know, and whom also you respect. Among many things, he writes, ' I believe profoundly that the peace and happiness of mankind depend on our friendship ' and, as if I would not understand that, he says ' your people and mine.' I must read to you what he also says : ' And of all Indians you are the one that the real Englishman likes and understands.'

" He does not waste any words on flattery, and I do not think he has intended this last expression to flatter me. It will not flatter me in the slightest degree. There are many things in this note which, if I could share them with you, would perhaps make you understand better the significance of this expression, but let me tell you that when he writes this last sentence he does not mean me personally. I personally signify nothing, and I know I would mean nothing to any single Englishman ; but I mean something to some Englishmen because I seek to represent a cause, because I seek to represent a nation, a great organisation which has made itself felt. That is the reason why he says this.

" But then, if I could possibly find that working basis, Prime Minister, there is ample room for compromise. It is friendship I crave. My business is not to throw overboard the slave-holder and tyrant. My philosophy forbids me to do so, and today the Congress has accepted that philosophy, not as a creed, as it is to me, but as a policy, because the Congress believes that it is the right and the best thing for India, a nation of 350,000,000, to do.

**Our weapon.** " A Nation of 350 million people does not need the dagger of the assassin, it does not need the poison bowl, it does not need the sword, the spear or the bullet. It needs simply a will of its own, an ability to say ' no,' and that nation is to-day learning to say ' no.' "

" But what is it that that nation does ? To summarily, or at all, dismiss Englishmen ? No. Its mission is today to convert Englishmen. I do not want to break

the bond between England and India, but I do want to transform that bond. I want to transform that slavery into complete freedom for my country. Call it complete independence or whatever you like, I will not quarrel about that word, and even though my countrymen may dispute with me for having taken some other word I shall be able to bear down that opposition so long as the content of the word that you may suggest to me bears the same meaning. Hence, I have times without number to urge upon your attention that the safeguards that have been suggested are completely unsatisfactory. They are not in the interests of India.

**Financial Cramp.** "Three experts from the Federation of Commerce and Industry have, in their own way, each in his different manner, told out of their expert experiences how utterly impossible it is for any body of responsible Ministers to tackle the problem of administration when 30 per cent of her resources are mortgaged irretrievably. Better than I could have shown to you they have shown out of the amplitude of their knowledge what these financial safeguards mean for India. They mean the complete cramping of India. They have discussed at this Table financial safeguards but that includes necessarily the question of Defence and the question of Army. Yet while I say that the safeguards are unsatisfactory as they have been presented I have not hesitated to say, and I do not hesitate to repeat that the Congress is pledged to giving safeguards, endorsing safeguards which may be demonstrated to be in the interests of India.

"At one of the sittings of the Federal Structure Committee I had no hesitation in amplifying the admission and saying that those safeguards must be also of benefit to Great Britain. I do not want safeguards which are merely beneficial to India and prejudicial to the real interests of Great Britain. The fancied interests of India will have to be sacrificed. The fancied interests of Great Britain will have to be sacrificed. The illegitimate interests of Great Britain will also have to be

sacrificed. Therefore, again I repeat, if we have the same meaning for the same word I will agree with Mr. Jayakar, with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and other distinguished speakers who have spoken at his Conference.

"I will agree with them all that we have, after all these labours, reached a substantial measure of agreement but my despair, my grief, is that I do not read the same words in the same light. The implications of the safeguards of Mr. Jayakar, I very much fear, are different from my implications, and the implications of Mr. Jayakar and myself are perhaps only different from the implications that Sir Samuel Hoare, for instance, has in mind ; I do not know. We have never really come to grips. We have never got down to brass tacks, as you put it, and I am anxious—I have been pining—to come to real grips and to get down to brass tacks all these days and all these nights, and I have felt: why are we not coming nearer and nearer together, and why are we wasting our time in eloquence, in oratory, in debating, and in scoring points ? Heaven knows, I have no desire to hear my own voice. Heaven knows I have no desire to take part in any debating. I know that liberty is made of sterner stuff, and I know that the freedom of India is made of much sterner stuff. We have problems that would baffle any statesman. We have problems that other nations have not to tackle. But they do not baffle me; they cannot baffle those who have been brought up in the Indian climate. Those problems are there with us. Just as we have to tackle our bubonic plague, we have to tackle the problem of malaria. We have to tackle, as you have not, the problem of snakes and scorpions, monkeys, tigers and lions. We have to tackle these problems because we have been brought up under them.

**Not baffled.** "They do not baffle us. Somehow or other we have survived the ravages of those venomous reptiles and various creatures. So also shall we survive our problem and find a way out of those problems. But today you and we have come together at a Round Table and we want to find a common formula which will work.

Please believe me that whilst I abate not a title of the claim that I have registered on behalf of the Congress, which I do not propose to repeat here, while I withdraw not one word of the speeches that I had to make at the Federal Structure Committee, I am here to compromise; I am here to consider every formula that British ingenuity can prepare, every formula that the ingenuity of such constitutionalists as Mr. Sastri, Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, Mr. Jinnah, Sir Muhammad Shafi and a host of others can weave into being.

"I will not be baffled. I shall be here as long as I am required because I do not want to revive civil disobedience. I want to turn the truce that was arrived at Delhi into a permanent settlement. But for heaven's sake, give me, a frail man 62 years gone, a little bit of a chance. Find a little corner for him and the organisation that he represents. You distrust that organisation though you may seemingly trust me. Not for one moment differentiate me from the organisation of which I am but a drop in the ocean. I am no greater than the organisation to which I belong. I am infinitely smaller than that organisation; and if you find me a place, if you trust me, I invite you to trust the Congress also. Your trust in me otherwise is a broken reed. I have no authority save what I derive from the Congress. If you will work the Congress for all it is worth, then you will say goodbye to terrorism; then you will not need terrorism. Today you have to fight the school of terrorists which is there with your disciplined and organised terrorism, because you will be blind to the facts or the writing on the wall. Will you not see the writing that these terrorists are writing with their blood? Will you not see that we do not want bread made of wheat, but we want bread of liberty; and without that liberty there are thousands today who are sworn not to give themselves peace or to give the country peace.

"I urge you then to read that writing on the wall. I ask you not to try the patience of a people known to be proverbially patient. We speak of the mild Hindu, and



Musalman also by contact good or evil with the Hindu has himself become mild. And that mention of the Musalman brings me to the baffling problem of Minorities. Believe me, that problem exists here, and I repeat what I used to say in India—I have not forgotten those words—that without the problem of Minorities being solved there is no Swaraj for India, there is no freedom for India. I know that I realise it : and yet I came here in the hope perchance that I might be able to pull through a solution here. But I do not despair of some day or other finding a real and living solution in connection with the Minorities problem. I repeat what I have said elsewhere that so long as the wedge in the shape of foreign rule divides community from community and class from class, there will be no real living solution, there will be no living friendship between these communities. It will be after all and at best a paper solution. But immediately you withdraw that wedge, the domestic ties, the domestic affections, the knowledge of common birth—do you suppose that all these will count for nothing ?

“Were Hindus and Musalmans and Sikhs always at war with one another when there was no British rule, when there was no English face seen there ? We have chapter and verse given to us by Hindu historians and by Musalman historians to say that we were living in comparative peace even then. And Hindus and Musalmans in the villages are not even today quarrelling. In those days they were not known to quarrel at all. The late Maulana Muhammad Ali often used to tell me, and he was himself a bit of an historian. He said: “If God”—“Allah” as he called God—“gives me life, I propose to write the history of Musalman rule in India; and then I will show through documents that British people have preserved, that Aurangzeb was not so vile as he has been painted by the British historian; that the Mogul rule was not so bad as it has been shown to us in British history; and so on. And so have Hindu historians written. This quarrel is not old; this quarrel is coeval with this acute shame. I dare to say, it is coeval with the British advent, and immediately

this relationship, the unfortunate, artificial, unnatural relationship between Great Britain and India is transformed into a natural relationship, when it becomes, if it does become, a voluntary partnership to be given up, to be dissolved at the will of either party, when it becomes, that you will find that Hindus, Musalmans, Sikhs, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Christians, untouchables, will all live together as one man.

"I do not intend to say much tonight about the Princess but I should be wronging them and should be wronging the Congress if I did not register my claim, not with Round Table Conference but with the Princes. It is open to the Princes to give their terms on which they will join the Federation. I have appealed to them to make the path easy for those who inhabit the other part of India, and therefore, I can only make these suggestions for their favourable consideration, for their earnest consideration. I think that if they accepted, no matter what they are, but some fundamental rights as the common property of all India, and if they accepted that position and allowed those rights to be tested by the Court, which will be again of their own creation, and if they introduced elements—only elements—of representation on behalf of their subjects, I think that they would have gone a long way to conciliate their subjects. They would have gone a long way to show to the world and to show to the whole of India that they are also fired with a democratic spirit, that they do not want to remain undiluted autocrats, but that they want to become constitutional monarchs even as King George of Great Britain is.

"Sir, a note has been placed in my hands by my friend Sir Abdul Quyum. He says "Will you not say one word about the Frontier Province?" I will; and it is this:

Let India get what she is entitled to and what she can really take, but whatever she gets, and whenever she gets it, let the Frontier Province get complete autonomy today. That Frontier will then be a standing demonstration to the whole of India, and therefore, the whole vote of

the Congress will be given in favour of the Frontier Province getting Provincial Autonomy tomorrow. Prime Minister, if you can possibly get your Cabinet to endorse the proposition that from tomorrow the Frontier Province becomes a full fledged autonomous province I shall then have a proper footing amongst the Frontier tribes and convene them to my assistance when those over the border cast an evil eye on India.

**Thanks.** "Last of all, my last task is a pleasant task for me. This is perhaps the last time that I shall be sitting with you at negotiations. It is not that I want that. I want to sit at the same table with you in your closets and to negotiate and to plead with you and to go down on bended knees before I take the final leap and final plunge.

"But, whether I have the good fortune to continue to tender my co-operation or not does not depend upon me. It largely depends upon you. But it may not even depend upon you. It depends upon so many circumstances over which neither you nor we may have any control whatsoever. Then, let me perform this pleasant task of giving my thanks to all from Their Majesties down to the poorest men in the East End where I have taken up my habitation.

"In that settlement, which represents the poor people of the East End of London, I have become one of them. They have accepted me as a member, and as a favoured member of their family. It will be one of the richest treasures that I shall carry with me. Here, too, I have found nothing but courtesy and nothing but a genuine affection from all with whom I have come in touch. I have come in touch with so many Englishmen. It has been a priceless privilege to me. They have listened to what must have often appeared to them to be unpleasant, although it was true. Although I have often been obliged to say these things to them they have never shown the slightest impatience or irritation. It is impossible for me to forget these things. No matter what befalls me, no matter what the fortunes may be of this

Round Table Conference, one thing I shall certainly carry with me, that is, that from high to low I have found nothing but the utmost courtesy and the utmost affection. I consider that it was well worth my paying this visit to England in order to find this human affection.

"It has enhanced, it has deepened my irrepressible faith in human nature that although Englishmen and Englishwomen have been fed upon lies so often that I see disfiguring your Press, that although in Lancashire the Lancashire people had perhaps some reason for becoming irritated against me, I found no irritation and no resentment even in the operatives. The operatives, men and women, hugged me. They treated me as one of their own. I shall never forget that.

"I am carrying with me thousands upon thousands of English friendships. I do not know them but I read that affection in their eyes as early in the morning I walk through your streets. All this hospitality, all this kindness will never be effaced from my memory, no matter what befalls my unhappy land. I thank you for your forbearance."

A little later while, thanking the Prime Minister for his labours as the Chairman of the Conference, Mahatmaji summed up his position as to the results of the Conference in the words :

"I have the greatest pleasure in moving this vote of thanks. But there is an additional reason, and it is perhaps a greater reason why I should shoulder this responsibility and esteem the privilege that has been given to me. It is somewhat likely, because I would like to study your declaration, once, twice, thrice. as often as it may be necessary, scanning every word of it, reading its hidden meaning if there is a hidden meaning in it, crossing all the T's, dotting all the I's, and if I then come to conclusion as just now seems to be likely, that so far as I am concerned we have come to parting of the way."

On hearing these words, the Prime Minister once more warned Gandhiji of the determination of the Tory Government to secure Indian co-operation on its own terms, and that if that were not forthcoming to meet with a strong hand all those who opposed it.

After this there was not much left for Gandhiji to do in England. He had a mind to spend a month or two in Europe to recuperate his health ; but he received urgent summons from India where, as a reflection of what was going on in England, the situation was developing rapidly towards another conflict. He cancelled the European tour and returned to India post haste. In his characteristic optimism he still hoped against hope that perhaps he might yet save the country from another ordeal.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES

**W**ITH all that was going on in England the Government of Lord Willingdon was in the closest touch. As the Hoare group had made up its mind not to yield to the Indian demand, repercussions of its decisions on the official world in India were natural. Even when the Conference was in session, and no final decisions had been arrived at, Lord Willingdon's advisers were forging ahead with an Ordinance Rule as an earnest for the Reforms which His Excellency so often and so glibly said he was trying to bring about.

The Viceregal armoury was readily supplied with a set of drastic Ordinances ready to be used as soon as the Conference ended. The members of the Congress Working Committee knew of all these secret moves. They knew what were the Ordinances and who had helped to frame them. They were prepared for all emergencies, but still they thought they should wait for Gandhiji to return and see if it were still possible to find a way out of the impasse.

The Provincial Governments had failed to implement the terms of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. When such breaches as were reported to the

Congress President were brought to the notice of the Government of India, in most cases the Government refused to accept the Congress viewpoint. There being no impartial body to give a decision on the matters under dispute, the correspondence between the Government and the Congress as regards the breaches of the truce terms degenerated into a sort of "you are liars" on both sides.

Even the Bardoli Enquiry for which Gandhiji had to struggle so hard proved abortive. The attitude of the Commissioner appointed to make the enquiry was so high-handed, arbitrary and partial that Sardar Patel, the Congress President, had to instruct the Congress representatives to withdraw from it and leave the enquiry to take its tortuous course in any manner the Government desired.

In the United Provinces a dispute over the land tax had been going on between the peasants and the Government for many years. The tax was already very heavy and owing to the general fall in prices it had become still more burdensome. Most of the peasants were quite unable to pay it. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact had recognised the difficulties of the peasants and there were good hopes of an amicable settlement. But in the midst of the negotiations between the Government and the Congress, the revenue officials started collections; they harassed those who could not pay. The Congress protested against this procedure but no heed was paid.

The Congress was, therefore, obliged to advise the peasants not to pay the taxes till some settlement had been arrived at. This gave Sir Malcolm Hailey the eagerly awaited pretext to launch the proposed repressive policy. The Congress in the U. P. was ordinances and declared unlawful.

Notwithstanding all the wiles of the Muslim Communalists, the Frontier Province, the only Province where Muslims are in a large majority, had remained a staunch supporter of the National Congress. Under the leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Congress organisation in the Province was given a new life ; Congress membership had increased by leaps and bounds. The Pathan took to non-violence as few other Indian Communities had ; his support of the national movement was as earnest as his enthusiasm for the new weapon put in his hand by Gandhiji. The Government tried to wean the Pathan from the Congress by their belated haste in introducing the Montford Reforms in that province. The Red Shirts,—that was the name of the Pathan Congress Volunteers—remained unmoved and would not be satisfied until complete Independence was promised. This was too much for the Frontier officials. An Ordinance proclaiming Red Shirts organization as an unlawful body was promulgated.

Congressmen in Bengal are more active and better organised than in any other province. The Bengal Nationalists have always been in the



forefront of the national movement. But Bengal is also the home of "terrorists". Their number is not large, not more than a few hundreds, but it is sufficient to cause some of the foreign officials to lose their mental balance.

Under the cloak of suppressing the terrorist movement the Bengal Government proclaimed Ordinance Rule in certain localities in the province and clapped many an innocent person in the jails. In certain places Black and Tan methods were adopted and a sort of martial law declared.

It was at such a juncture that Gandhiji left Europe for the Indian shores. In anticipation of his arrival the Congress President called a meeting

Working Committee in Bombay. But Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru; Mr. Sherwani, President of the U. P. Congress; and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who were coming to Bombay to attend the meeting and to welcome Mahatmaji, were arrested and sent to prison. The Frontier leader was arrested and deported without any known charge. Pandit Jawahar Lal and Mr. Sherwani were arrested because they refused to obey the orders interning them in their town.

Gandhiji received an unprecedented welcome at Bombay. It was unmistakably shown that in the bold stand he had made for the Indian cause at the Round Table Conference he had all the Indian communities at his back.

Gandhiji was soon closeted with the Working

Committee and after hearing the tale of woe from all sides, requested the Viceroy to grant him an interview for the discussion of the situation in the U. P., the Frontier Province and Bengal. The request was summarily turned down ; Mahatmaji was insolently asked to repudiate the Congress before he could have the honour of seeing such an august person as Lord Willingdon and agree to discuss with him only what his Lordship might graciously condescend to permit. We have summarised. This does not do adequate justice to the correspondence that passed between Mahatmaji and the Viceroy. We reproduce below the whole of the correspondence as published by the Government.

1. *Telegram from Mr. Gandhi, to His Excellency the Viceroy, dated the 29th December, 1931.*

"I was unprepared on landing yesterday to find Frontier and U. P. Ordinances, shootings in Frontier and arrests of valued comrades in both, on top of Bengal Ordinance awaiting me. I do not know whether I am to regard these as indication that friendly relations between us are closed or whether you expect me still to see you and receive guidance from you as to course I am to pursue in advising Congress. I would esteem wire in reply."

2. *Telegram from the Private Secretary to the Viceroy, to Mr. Gandhi, dated the 31st December, 1931.*

No. 306-C. "His Excellency desires me to thank you for your telegram of the 29th instant in which you refer to Bengal and United Provinces and N.W.F.P. Ordinances. In regard to Bengal it has been and is necessary for Government to take all possible measures to prevent dastardly assassination of their officers and private citizens.

2. "His Excellency wishes me to say that he and his Government desire to have friendly relations with all political parties and with all sections of the public

and in particular to securing co-operation of all in great work of constitutional reforms which they are determined to push forward with minimum delay. Co-operation, however, must be mutual and His Excellency and his Government cannot reconcile activities of Congress in the United Provinces and N. W. F. P. with spirit of friendly co operation which good of India demands.

3. "As regards United Provinces you are doubtless aware that while the Local Government were engaged in devising means to give all possible relief in the existing situation, the Provincial Congress Committee authorised a no-rent campaign which is now being vigorously pursued by Congress organisations in that province. This action on the part of Congress bodies has compelled Government to take measures to prevent a general state of disorder and spreading of class and communal hatred which campaign, if continued unchecked, would inevitably involve.

4. "In North-West Frontier Province Abdul Gaffar Khan and bodies he controlled have continuously engaged in activities against Government and in fomenting racial hatred. He and his friends have persistently refused all overtures by the Chief Commissioner to secure their co-operation and rejecting the declaration of the Prime Minister, have declared in favour of complete independence. Abdul Gaffar Khan has delivered numerous speeches open to no other construction than as incitements to revolution and his adherents have attempted to stir trouble in tribal area. The Chief Commissioner with the approval of His Excellency's Government has shown utmost forbearance and to the last moment continued his efforts to secure assistance of Abdul Gaffar in carrying into effect with the least possible delay, the intentions of His Majesty's Government regarding constitutional reforms in the province. The Government refrained from taking special measures until activities of Abdul Gaffar Khan and his associates and in particular open and intensive preparation for an early conflict with Government created a situation of

such grave menace to peace of province and of tribal areas as to make it impossible further to delay action. His Excellency understands that Abdul Gaffar Khan was in August last made responsible for leading Congress movement in province; and that volunteer organisations he controlled were specially recognised by All-India Congress Committee as Congress organisations. His Excellency desires me to make it clear that his responsibilities for peace and order make it impossible for him to have any dealing with persons or organizations upon whom rests the responsibility for activities above outlined. You have yourself been absent from India on the business of Round Table Conference and in light of the attitude which you have observed there, His Excellency is unwilling to believe that you have personally any share in responsibility for or that you approve of recent activities of Congress in the United Provinces and North-West Frontier Province. If this is so, he is willing to see you and to give you his views as to the way in which you can best exert your influence to maintain a spirit of co-operation which animated proceedings of Round Table Conference, but His Excellency feels bound to emphasise that he will not be prepared to discuss with you measures which Government of India with the full approval of His Majesty's Government have found it necessary to adopt in Bengal, United Provinces and North-West Frontier Province. These measures must in any case be kept in force until they have served purpose, for which they were imposed, namely preservation of law and order essential to good Government. On receipt of your reply, His Excellency proposes to publish this correspondence."

3. *Telegram from Mr. Gandhi, to the Private Secretary to His Excellency the Viceroy, dated the 1st January, 1932.*

"I thank His Excellency for wire in reply to mine of 29th instant. It grieves me. For His Excellency has rejected in a manner hardly befitting his high position, an advance made in friendliest spirit. I had approached

as seeker wanting light on questions while I desired to understand Government version of very serious and extraordinary measures to which I made reference. Instead of appreciating my advance, His Excellency has rejected it by asking me to repudiate my valued colleagues in advance and telling me that even if I become guilty of such dishonourable conduct and sought an interview, I could not even discuss these matters of vital importance to the nation.

"In my opinion, constitutional issue dwindles into insignificance in face of ordinances and acts which must, if not met with stubborn resistance, end in utter demoralisation of nation. I hope no self-respecting Indian will run risk of killing national spirit for a doubtful contingency of securing a constitution to work which no nation with a stamina may be left. Let me also point out that as to the Frontier Province, your telegram contains a narration of facts which, on face of them, furnish no warrant for arrests of popular leaders, passing of extra legal ordinance, making life and property utterly insecure and shooting unarmed peaceful crowds for daring to demonstrations against arrests of their trusted leaders. If Khan Saheb Abdul Gaffar asserted the right of complete independence, it was a natural claim and the claim made with impunity by the Congress at Lahore in 1929 and by me with energy put before the British Government in London. Moreover let me remind the Viceroy that despite knowledge on Government's part that Congress mandate contained such claim, I was invited to attend London Conference as Congress delegate. Nor am I able to detect in a mere refusal to attend Durbar an offence warranting summary imprisonment. If Khan Saheb was fomenting racial hatred, it was undoubtedly regrettable. I have his own declarations to the contrary made to me, but assuming that he did foment racial hatred, he was entitled to open trial, where he could have defended himself against accusation. Regarding United Provinces, His Excellency is surely misinformed, because there was no "no-rent" campaign

authorised by Congress, but whilst negotiations were proceeding between Government and Congress representatives, the time for collection of rents actually arrived and rents began to be demanded. Congress men were therefore obliged to advise tenants to suspend payment pending the result of the negotiations and Mr. Sherwani had offered on behalf of the Congress to withdraw this advice if the authorities suspended collections pending negotiations. I venture to suggest that this is not a matter which can be so summarily dismissed as your wire has done. Controversy in the United Provinces is of a long standing and involves well-being of millions of peasantry known to be economically ground down. Any Government jealous of the welfare of the masses in its charge would welcome voluntary co-operation of a body like the Congress ; which admittedly exercises great influence over the masses and whose one ambition is to serve them faithfully and let me add that I regard the withholding of payment of taxes as an inalienable ancient and natural right of a people who have exhausted all other means of seeking freedom from an unbearable economic burden. I must repudiate suggestion that the Congress has slightest desire to promote disorder in any shape or form.

As to Bengal the Congress is at one with the Government in condemning assassination and should heartily co-operate with the Government in measures that may be found necessary to stamp out such crimes. But whilst the Congress would condemn in unmeasured terms the methods of terrorism, it can in no way associate itself with Government terrorism as is betrayed by the Bengal Ordinance and acts done thereunder, but, must resist within the limits of its prescribed creed of non-violence, such measures of legalised Government terrorism. I heartily assent to the proposition laid down in your telegram that co-operation must be mutual but your telegram leads me irresistibly to the conclusion that His Excellency demands co-operation from the Congress without returning any on behalf of Government. I can

read in no other way his peremptory refusal to discuss these matters which, as I have endeavoured to show, have at least two sides. Popular side I have put, as I understand it, but before committing myself to definite judgment, I was anxious to understand the other side, *i. e.*, the Government side and then tender my advice to the Congress. With reference to the last paragraph of your telegram, I may not repudiate moral liability for the actions of my colleagues, whether in the Frontier Province or in the United Provinces, but I confess that I was ignorant of the detailed actions and activities of my colleagues whilst I was absent from India, and it was because it was necessary for me to advise and guide the Working Committee of the Congress and in order to complete my knowledge, I sought with an open mind and with the best of intentions an interview with His Excellency and deliberately asked for his guidance. I cannot conceal from His Excellency my opinion that the reply he has condescended to send was hardly a return for my friendly and well-meant approach, and if it is not yet too late, I would ask His Excellency to reconsider his decision and see me as a friend without imposing any conditions whatsoever as to the scope or subject of discussion and I, on my part, can promise that I would study with an open mind all the facts that he might put before me. I would unhesitatingly and willingly go to the respective provinces and with the aid of the authorities study both sides of the question and if I came to the conclusion after such a study, the people were in the wrong and the Working Committee including myself were misled as to the correct position, and that the Government was right, I should have no hesitation whatsoever in making that open confession and guiding the Congress accordingly. Along with my desire and willingness to co-operate with Government I must place my limitations before His Excellency. Non-violence is my absolute creed. I believe that Civil Disobedience is not only the natural right, of people especially when they have no effective voice in

their own Government, but that it also is an effective substitute for violence or armed rebellion. I can never, therefore, deny my creed. In pursuance thereof and on the strength of uncontradicted reports supported by recent activities of the Government of India to the effect that there may be on other opportunity for me to guide the public, the Working Committee has accepted my advice and passed resolutions tentatively sketching a plan of Civil Disobedience. I am sending herewith text of resolution. If His Excellency thinks it worth while to see me, operation of the resolution will be suspended pending our discussion in hope that it may result in the resolution being finally given up. I admit that correspondence between His Excellency and myself is of such grave importance as not to brook delay in publication. I am, therefore, sending my telegram, your reply, this rejoinder and the Working Committee's resolution for publication."

[*Text of Resolution of Working Committee referred to above.*]

The Working Committee has heard Mahatma Gandhi's account of his visit to the West and considered the situation created by the extraordinary Ordinances promulgated in Bengal, United Provinces and the Frontier Province and by the actions of the authorities including the numerous arrests made among those of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Mr. Sherwani and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and by the shootings in the Frontier Province of innocent men resulting in many deaths and many more being injured. The Working Committee has also seen the telegram from His Excellency the Viceroy in reply to the telegram sent by Mahatma Gandhi to him.

The Working Committee is of opinion that these several acts and others of lesser gravity that have taken place in some other provinces and the telegram from His Excellency seem to make further co-operation with the Government on the part of the Congress utterly impossible unless the Government policy is radically changed. These acts and the telegram



betray no intention on the part of bureaucracy to hand power to the people and are calculated to demoralise the nation. They also betray want of faith in the Congress from which co-operation is expected by the Government.

"The Working Committee yields to no one in its abhorrence of terrorism on any account whatsoever resorted to by individuals such as was recently witnessed in Bengal but it condemns with equal force terrorism practised by Government as shown by its recent acts and Ordinances. The Working Committee marks the deep national humiliation over the assassination committed by two girls in Comilla and is firmly convinced that such crime does great harm to the nation especially when through its greatest political mouthpiece—the Congress—it is pledged to non-violence for achieving Swaraj. But the Working Committee can see no justification whatsoever for the Bengal Ordinance which seeks to punish a whole people for the crime of a few. The real remedy lies in dealing with the known cause that prompts such crime.

"If Bengal Ordinance has no justification for its existence the Ordinances in the United Provinces and the Frontier Province have still less. The Working Committee is of opinion that the measures taken by the Congress in the United Provinces for obtaining agrarian relief are and can be shown to be justified. The Working Committee holds that it is the unquestionable right of all people suffering from grave economic distress as the tenantry of the United Provinces is admittedly suffering to withhold payment of taxes if they fail as in the United Provinces they have failed to obtain redress by other constitutional methods.

"In the arrest and imprisonment of Mr. Sherwani, the President of the United Provinces Congress Committee, and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the Working General Secretary of the Congress, who were proceeding to Bombay to confer with Mahatma Gandhi and to take part in the meeting of the Working Committee, the Government have gone even

beyond the limits contemplated by their Ordinance in that there was no question whatsoever of these gentlemen taking part in Bombay in a no-tax campaign in the United Provinces.

"So far as the Frontier Province is concerned on the Government's own showing there appears to be no warrant for either the promulgation of the Ordinance or the arrest and imprisonment without trial of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and his co-workers. The Working Committee regards the shooting in that Province of innocent and unarmed men to be wanton and inhuman and congratulates the brave men of the Frontier Province upon their courage and endurance and the Working Committee has no doubt that if the brave people of the Frontier Province retain their non-violent spirit in spite of the gravest provocations their blood and their sufferings would advance the cause of India's independence.

"The Working Committee calls upon the Government of India to institute a public and impartial enquiry into the events that have led up to the passing of these Ordinances, the necessity of superseding the ordinary courts of Law and Legislative machinery and the necessity of several acts committed thereunder. And thereafter if a proper enquiry is set up and all facilities are given to the Working Committee for the production of evidence it will be prepared to assist the enquiry by leading evidence before it.

"The Working Committee has considered the declaration of the Prime Minister made before the Round Table Conference and the debates in the Houses of Parliament and regards the declaration as wholly unsatisfactory and inadequate in terms of the Congress demand and places on record its opinion that nothing short of complete independence carrying full control over the defence and external affairs and finance with such safeguards as may be demonstrably necessary in the interest of the nation can be regarded by the Congress as satisfactory. /

The Working Committee notes that the British Government was not prepared at the Round Table Conference to regard the Congress as representing and entitled to speak and act on behalf of the nation as a whole without distinction of caste, creed or colour. At the same time the Committee recognises with sorrow that communal harmony could not be attained at the said conference. The Working Committee invites the nation, therefore, to make ceaseless effort to demonstrate the capacity of the Congress to represent the nation as a whole and promote an atmosphere that would make a constitution framed on a purely national basis acceptable to the various communities composing the nation. Meanwhile the Working Committee is prepared to tender co-operation to the Government provided His Excellency the Viceroy reconsiders his telegram and adequate relief is granted in respect of the Ordinances and its recent acts, free scope is left to the Congress in any future further negotiations to prosecute the Congress claim for complete independence and the administration of the country is carried on in consultation with popular representatives, pending the attainment of such independence.

"The absence of any satisfactory response from the Government in terms of the foregoing paragraph the Working Committee will regard it as an indication on the part of the Government that it has reduced to nullity the Delhi pact. In the event of a satisfactory response not forthcoming the Working Committee calls upon the nation to resume Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes under the following conditions and illustrative heads :—

(1) No Province or district or tahsil or village is bound to take up Civil Disobedience unless the people thereof understand the non-violent nature of the struggle with all its implications and are ready to undergo sufferings involving loss of life and property.

(2) Non-violence must be observed in thought,

word and deed in the face of the gravest provocation, it being understood that the campaign is not one of seeking revenge or inflicting injuries on the oppressor but it is one of converting him through self-suffering and self-purification

(3) Social boycott with the intention of inflicting injury on Government Officers, police or anti-nationalists should not be undertaken and is wholly inconsistent with the spirit of non-violence.

(4) It should be borne in mind that non-violent campaigns are independent of pecuniary assistance therefore there should be no hired volunteers but their bare maintenance and maintenance of the dependents of poor men and women who might have been imprisoned or killed is permissible wherever it is possible. The Working Committee, however, expects workers in the cause to continue the struggle even though they might have to suffer privations.

(5) Boycott of all foreign cloth whether British or of other countries is obligatory under all circumstances.

(6) All Congress men and women are expected to use handspun and handwoven khaddar to the exclusion of even cloth manufactured in the indigenous mills.

(7) Picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops should be vigorously conducted chiefly by women but always so as to ensure perfect non-violence.

(8) Unlicensed manufacture and collection of salt should be resumed.

(9) If processions and demonstrations are organised only those should join them who will stand lathi charges or bullets without moving from their respective places.

(10) Even in non violent war boycott of goods manufactured by the oppressors is perfectly lawful inasmuch as it is never the duty of the victim to promote or retain commercial relations with the oppressor. Therefore boycott of British goods and concerns should be resumed and vigorously prosecuted.

(11) Civil breach of non-moral laws and of laws

and orders injurious to the people wherever it is considered possible and advisable may be practised.

(12) All unjust orders issued under the Ordinance may be civilly disobeyed."

4. *Telegram from the Private Secretary to His Excellency the Viceroy, to Mr. Gandhi, dated the 2nd January 1932.*

No. 3-S.—"His Excellency desires me to acknowledge receipt of your telegram of 1st January which has been considered by him and his Government.

"They much regret to observe that under your advice the Congress Working Committee has passed a resolution which involves general revival of Civil Disobedience unless certain conditions are satisfied which are stated in your telegram and the resolution.

"They regard this attitude as the more deplorable in view of the declared intentions of His Majesty's Government and Government of India to expedite the policy of constitutional reform contained in the Premier's statement.

"No Government, consistent with the discharge of their responsibility, can be subject to condition sought to be imposed under the menace of unlawful action by any political organisation, nor can the Government of India accept the position implied in your telegram that their policy should be dependent on the judgment of yourself as to necessity of measures which Government have taken after the most careful and thorough consideration of the facts and after all other possible remedies had been exhausted.

"His Excellency and his Government can hardly believe that you or the Working Committee contemplate that His Excellency can invite you, with the hope of any advantage, to an interview held under the threat of resumption of Civil Disobedience.

"They must hold you and the Congress responsible for all the consequences that may ensue from the action which the Congress have announced their intention of taking and to meet which Government will take all necessary measures."

5. *Telegram from Mr. M. K. Gandhi, to the Private Secretary to His Excellency the Viceroy dated the 3rd January 1932.*

"Thanks your wire even date. I cannot help expressing deep regret for decision of His Excellency and his Government. Surely it is wrong to describe honest expression of opinion as threat. May I remind Government that Delhi negotiations were opened and carried on whilst Civil Disobedience was on and that when pact was made Civil Disobedience was not given up but only discontinued. This position was reasserted and accepted by His Excellency and his Government in Simla in September last prior to my departure for London. Although I had made it clear that under certain circumstances Congress might have to resume Civil Disobedience Government did not break off negotiations. That it was made clear by Government that civil disobedience carried with it penalty for disobedience merely proves what civil resisters bargain for but does not in any way affect my argument. Had Government resented attitude it was open to them not to send me to London. On the contrary my departure had His Excellency's blessings. Nor is it fair or correct to suggest that I have ever advanced the claim that any policy of Government should be dependent on my judgment. But I do submit that any popular and constitutional Government would always welcome and sympathetically consider suggestions made by public bodies and their representatives and assist them with all available information about their acts or ordinances of which public opinion may disapprove. I claim that my messages have no other meaning than what is suggested in last paragraph. Time alone will show whose position was justified. Meanwhile I wish to assure Government that every endeavour will be made on part of Congress to carry on struggle without malice and in strictly non-violent manner. It was hardly necessary to remind me that Congress and I its humble representative are responsible for all the consequences of our actions."

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## CHAPTER XXV

### THE THIRD CAMPAIGN

IT is not difficult to see from the correspondence given in the last chapter that Lord Willingdon's mind was made up as to his attitude towards the Congress. The Congress was charged with trying to establish a parallel Government in the country. The Congress pleaded guilty to the charge. If British were honest to hand over the Government of the country to its people why should they feel afraid of parallel Government run on peaceful and voluntary basis. As Gandhiji declared more than once they should rather encourage such a movement. But as it had been decided by the reactionary clique in London that Indians were still to be kept as slaves, no negotiations about the administrative affairs of the country could be carried on equal footing with a body that aspired to replace the foreign agency.

Last time, in the year 1930, it was Mahatma Gandhi, or the Congress, who issued a challenge to the Government and initiated the attack when the Government failed to comply with the country's demand. The Government of Lord Irwin was, in the beginning, in a more or less defensive attitude. The

policy was to draw the Congressmen on and on, and when they had come sufficiently away from their base, to overwhelm them by a sudden attack. As has already been shown these tactics failed and Lord Irwin had to come to terms with Gandhiji. This time tactics of quite another kind were adopted. The Government initiated the attack against the Congress even without a notice. The offensive was started all of a sudden and in full vigour.

Within a week of the publication of the correspondence between Mahatmaji and Lord Willingdon, Mahatmaji and Sardar Patel, President of the Congress, were arrested and imprisoned for an indefinite period and without any trial. But before they were arrested the following further resolutions had been adopted by the Working Committee which met at Mani Bhavan, Bombay, on the 1st January, 1932, at 3 p. m.:—

**“1. Appeal to the Free Nations of the World.** A non-violent and righteous movement depends for its success on gathering round it the strength of public opinion. This public opinion of the world, the Working Committee gratefully acknowledges, is being slowly but surely drawn in ever increasing degree towards India's right for national independence. On the eve of the fresh ordeal to which the Nation has been summoned, the Working Committee invites the free people of the world and their Governments to watch and study the progress of the movement and if they are convinced of the justness of the unique means adopted by the Congress for reaching the national goal, to give to the movement their enlightened support in a greater and more effective measure than heretofore. In the opinion of the Working Committee the



non-violent method adopted by the Congress gives it a world-wide importance and if the method becomes demonstrably successful it is likely to furnish an effective moral equivalent for war and thus make a lasting contribution to the progress of humanity groaning under the dead weight of armaments.

**"2. Non-payment of indirect taxes.** It is not commonly known that under modern artificial conditions people pay more to the State through indirect taxation than through direct taxation. Thus the nation pays the State crores of rupees through the State railways, post and telegraph services, the customs and the like. If the nation realised this fact all young and old who use these services can take an effective part in the no-tax campaign inaugurated by the Working Committee. The Working Committee therefore calls upon all concerned to help the movement and themselves by reducing to the minimum their use of such services and articles on which customs are paid. The Working Committee draws the attention of the public to the fact that the reduction here proposed in addition to promoting the no-tax movement and thus withdrawing support from a system which the nation seeks to change will decrease individual expenditure in these hard times and in the case of goods covered by customs will encourage Swadeshi.

**"3. Reassurance to Zamindars.** In as much as some misapprehension has been created in the minds of the Zamindars of U. P. in particular and others in general that in discussing proposals for non-payment of rent or taxes under given circumstances the Congress was contemplating a class-war, the Working Committee assures the Zamindars concerned that the no-rent proposals referred to were in no way aimed at them but that they represent an economic necessity for the peasantry which is known to be half-starved and at present suffering from unprecedented economic distress. The Working Committee has no design upon any interest legitimately acquired and not in conflict with the national well being. The Working Committee, therefore, appeals to all landed

or monied classes to help the Congress to the best of their ability in its fight for the freedom of the country.

**"4. Appeal to other Parties and Organizations.**

The Working Committee is deeply conscious of the responsibility that attaches to it in the invitation it has issued to the nation to go through a further process of self-suffering in its pursuit after its natural goal. The Working Committee has done so in the hope that it has the sympathy and co-operation of all political and commercial associations and all those who have hitherto kept away from the Congress. The Working Committee hopes, therefore, that the Congress will receive such support from these bodies and Communities as it is in their power to give.

**"5. Appeal to foreign-cloth Merchants.** The Working Committee appeals to all the foreign-cloth merchants that it is high time that they now gave up their foreign cloth trade. They must recognise that trade in foreign cloth is opposed to the best interest of the nation and that their full hearted co-operation with the nation is sure to lessen the sufferings of the people in as much as foreign-cloth trade is a powerful factor in tightening the foreign yoke and in further impoverishing the peasantry which lives in a state of chronic distress.

**"6. Indigenous Mills.** The Working Committee trusts that the owners, agents and shareholders of indigenous mills will give their unstinted support to the nation in the ordeal to which the Working Committee has invited it and therefore hopes that they will not exploit the struggle for multiplying profits or for damaging the *Khaddar* movement by competing with it whether by spinning and weaving low counts or by selling their manufactures under the name of *Khadi*."

As many as thirteen Ordinances which are believed to have been secretly forged when the Round Table Conference was supposed to try to placate Indian opinion, were issued, and the general

haul up of Congressmen started all over the country. The local Congress Committees in all the Provinces were declared as "Unlawful Associations." People were thrown into jails for hoisting the national flag or for persuading their countrymen to use goods made in their own country. The Prince of Wales asked his countrymen to "Buy British" and was applauded for it. If an Indian used the slogan "Buy Indian" he was thrown in to prison. Many Indians were incarcerated without trial ; others were given sentences ranging as high as two years for not obeying arbitrary and humiliating orders to report themselves daily to the Police.

Women again came into the thick of the fight. Notwithstanding the insulting and humiliating treatment meted out to Lady Volunteers their enthusiasm for the country's cause was as great as ever. Even sacred bridal symbols which an Indian lady must wear during the life time of her husband, were snatched by rough police hands under orders of British Magistrates. But the soul of Indian Womanhood stood the test and flinched not an inch from the path set before it.

Bombay, Bengal, United Provinces, Bihar and the Frontier Province were again in the forefront of the fight. But the most surprising of all was the rally of the Pathans to the National cause. More Frontier Moslems laid their lives this time for the country and in proportion to their numbers more of them went to the prison than any other community.

About a lakh of men and women were arrested all over India though the actual convictions were little less than those of the year 1930. The reason was, as Miss Wilkinson, a member of British Parliament who had come out to India to see things for herself remarked, "They do not arrest, they beat." But this beating deterred nobody. Volunteers offered themselves for arrest as long as the Government was prepared to do so.

The idea at the back of Lord Willingdon's policy was not only to repress the movement but also to terrorise the people. In places like Chittagong thousands of Hindus were forced to pay fines for offences with which they had absolutely no connection and with which no effort was ever made to prove their connection. A whole college was ordered to be closed if the students could not find who had posted seditious bills on the college walls. The mischief might be the work of a C. I. D. man or other person ill-disposed towards the college, it did not matter. Poor Tommies were paraded, often perhaps against their best mind, in the Bengal villages to proclaim the might of the British Empire, and to train Indian women and children in the art of 'loyalty'.

In some places mischievous persons who did not wish well to the national movement tried to produce side shows to distract the mind of the people from their objective. Just as in 1930 communal fights were staged in Cawnpore, this

time, Bombay, a place where national activities were most in evidence, was selected for the purpose. Hundreds of men were killed in Hindu-Muslim street fights but owing to the general disgust in the country for such scenes the trouble remained localised and soon died out. Those who worked from behind the scenes were afraid of being exposed and had to retire soon to escape the natural consequences of their nefarious exploits.

Lord Willingdon is said to have boasted that he would crush the whole movement within six weeks ; but month after month passed and the movement still weighed the official mind like a terrible nightmare. As Lord Irwin had failed to crush the movement by defensive tactics, Lord Willingdon's offensive tactics met the same fate. The Congress could not be crushed. It represented the spirit of the Indian nation thirsting for freedom. And when a people are once roused to make their country free, no earthly forces have ever succeeded in thwarting or checking them.

The attention of the Civil Resister this time was concentrated on the Boycott of British goods, especially cloth. Bengal, Behar and the United Provinces took prominent part in the campaign for non-payment of taxes, but except in the U. P., the movement did not prove a great success.

Other items of the programme were not touched; but the boycott movement was a great success. Before the War India imported from England

cloth worth about 100 crores of rupees. Owing to the advance of the national movement and the growing bitterness against the British, the amount of cloth imported from England fell down to between 20 to 30 crores. This decrease was not due to the general depression as the apologists of the Government would like us to believe. During this period the production of the Indian mills increased by about 300 per cent and imports of cloth from Japan, the United States and other countries went up more than 200 per cent.

The same was the tale about other imports from England. British imports fell down from about 65 per cent in 1913 to about 42 per cent in 1932. During the same period imports from Japan went up 400 per cent, from America and Switzerland by about 300 per cent and from China, Straits Settlements, and Netherlands by about 200 per cent.\*

The reactionaries both in England and India tried to show that these figures were not very tragic, but nobody could deny that there was some significance about them. There was a lesson in these figures for those who wanted to keep India down in the interests of the British trade. These figures were the result of their wrong doings. The comparative figures of the increase of Indian trade with the rivals of the British completely shattered the theory that decrease of Indian trade with the British was due to world depression.

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\*The figures are taken from the Government Blue Book on the Indian Trade.

The national movement in India started a little before the Great War; it gained its momentum just after the War; since then it has continued to gain strength every day. The British did not suitably respond to the movement. The result was a growing discontent and bitterness against the British which the above figures unmistakably proclaim. It is true that the Congress failed to paralyse the Government; but the above figures proved eloquently the ever-growing effectiveness of the movement.

It is for this reason that though Government had armed itself with such drastic powers as the Ordinances gave it, it was not able to restore peace to the country. Even when more than a year had passed since it launched the repressive policy, it had to go on its knees to the legislatures for the enactment of new laws embodying the various provisions of the Ordinances. Unfortunately for it, in no legislature could it receive the support of a majority of the elected members. The new laws were passed with the support of the bulging official *blocs*.

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## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE COMMUNAL AWARD

**F**OR carrying out their reactionary plans against Indian aspirations the Tory politicians mainly relied on Moslem communalists, the more pliable amongst the Indian Princes and some hypocrites amongst Indian Liberals who said one thing to the British and another to the Indians. We have already said something about the Liberals and Indian Princes. In order to finally win over the Moslems and some of the minorities, the Prime Minister announced in August the British Cabinet's communal proposals, mis-named Communal Award. But the "Award" satisfied none except the British reactionaries and those of the Moslems who had sold their 'souls' to the British imperialists. The Christians condemned the so-called "Award" in as strong a language as possible, the Sikhs were exasperated, and the Depressed Classes disowned it soon afterwards. Even the Moslem Communalist organisations like Khilafat, Jamiat-ul-Ulema, Ahrars, Shia Conference and about thirty other associations repudiated the proposals that were adumbrated to win them over.



The Montagu Chelmsford Report strongly condemned communal electorates. It said :

" They are opposed to the teaching of history, they perpetuate class divisions, stereotype existing relations, and are a serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle."

\* \* \* \* \*

" Division by creeds and classes means the creation of political camps organised against each other, and teaches men to think as partisans and not as citizens ; and it is difficult to see how the change from the system to national representation is ever to occur. The British Government is often accused of dividing men in order to govern them. But if it unnecessarily divides them at the very moment when it professes to start them on the road to governing themselves, it will find it difficult to meet the charge of being hypocritical or short-sighted. We regard any system of communal electorate, therefore, as a very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle."

Notwithstanding these clear views, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms divided Indians into Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs. This time the Prime Minister pushed the wedge still further. The Christians, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, and the Depressed Classes were also given separate electorates. How could a nation so divided and sub-divided put forward in future a claim to national Independence ?

One part of the Communal proposals received special attention from Mahatma Gandhi. When in England he saw how efforts were being made to divide the Hindus amongst themselves by separating the Depressed classes from the caste Hindus. To

defeat this wicked move, Mahatmaji challenged the British statesmen that if they persisted in their course, he would resist them with his life. From behind the prison bars he again and again warned the responsible authorities of his determination to resist the attempt with the utmost strength he possessed. The Tory Cabinet, drunk with the power the number of its supporters in the Parliament gave it, cared not a straw for what Mahatmaji said.

But Mahatmaji could not take things lying down even if he were shut up behind the prison walls. On the 20th of September, 1932, he declared the now historical fast. Even men like Ambhedkar whose anti-Hindu and anti-Indian activities had become notorious, were obliged to stop the suborned propaganda against Mahatmaji. The British Government had to bow down. Within a week of the fast, the Communal "Award" was modified and the axe designed to cut the Hindus into two broken.

Some short-sighted people regarded Mahatmaji's action as a communal move. Mahatmaji has declared it many times that he is a Hindu; he has never denied his love of Hinduism as one of the guiding forces that inspire his life and conduct. But his love of Hinduism embraces equally the love and service of all other communities. In his readiness to sacrifice his life for the Untouchables he showed his love not

only for the Hindus but for the whole of the depressed humanity. The Indian untouchables represent the depressed classes all the world over. Untouchability in the wider sense of the term is not confined to India ; America and Europe are as much infected with it, though not in such an ugly manner, as India.

The present form of untouchability in India is almost as old as the hills. Many an Indian reformer have tried to remove it but with little success. Gandhiji, and with him the Congress, were diligently working to uproot the evil. But this "Award" of an enlightened Government wanted to undo all that and perpetuate untouchability in India perhaps for ever. Gandhiji's fast in one stroke subverted the whole plot. Caste Hindus were never before so alive to their duty in this direction as after the fast.

India is bound to get freedom ; if not immediately, certainly in the near future. But for Gandhiji's supreme sacrifice no body could have said the same thing about the uplift of the Untouchables. If the new impulse succeeds in freeing millions of Depressed Hindus from the curse of untouchability and the consequent poverty and degradation, Gandhiji should be regarded to have done more for humanity than even the winning of political Swaraj for India.

The Communal "Award" had to be withdrawn at least as far as the Harijans or the Depressed Classes were concerned. The other Indian communities

are hammering at it ; it is sure to be blown up sooner or later.

As has already been said it was wrong to suppose that it has satisfied even the Moslems. The best mind of Islam was as much against it as that of any other community. It was for this reason that the services of Sir Fazl-i-Hussain had to be commissioned to give it life. Below are given a few extracts from a letter which this gentleman had to issue to Moslem leaders to secure their support for the " Award."

When the letter was issued Sir Fazl-i-Hussain was the member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and Service rules forbade him from all such propaganda. Though questions were asked in the Assembly about these unconstitutional activities, the Punjab knight was none the worse for it. The extracts themselves, and the circumstances in which this letter was circulated throw further light on the understanding arrived at between certain sections of the Moslem community and the representatives of the Tory diehards in India.

Among others the circular latter contained the following gems :—

" Moslems should decide to stand by Government, but do nothing to express this decision.....".

" The Prime Minister's announcement gives the Moslems a position to which they could not have aspired....."

" The announcement makes a distinct advance of

Moslems' rights..... It is distinct and brilliant ; effective against Mahasabha, Sikhs, Congress and Liberals."

But let us go to the main arguments given in the circular, According to it.—

"The Award is :—

1. From the Hindu point of view :—

- (i) Mode of representation, seperate.
- (ii) Principle governing weightage substant.
- (iii) Extension of seperate representation to Europeans in all provinces, to Anglo-Indians for the first time and to Indian Christians probably in all provinces.
- (iv) Seperate representation of Depressed Classes for first time.

"On these four points the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress have been over-ruled.

2. From the Moslem point of view :—

- (i) Mode of representation, fully considered.
- (ii) Minority Provinces, weightage principle fully considered.
- (iii) Actual percentage of weightage allowed, on the whole satisfactory. In this connection it should be remembered that the percentage now obtained over the whole council gives a larger number of Moslem members than would have been the case if the old Lucknow Pact percentage had been allowed on general constituencies alone.
- (iv) For the Frontier Province the constitution provides for the elimination of nomination both of officials and non-officials. This is very great step in advance within a few months of the introduction of the reforms.
- (v) The Punjab, on the whole quite satisfactory.
- (vi) Bengal, unsatisfactory.

"The following points should be borne in mind:—

- (a) The present position of Moslem representation

is nearly 32 per cent of non-official members ; in the proposal it will be above 48.

- (b) The present position of Hindu representation is over 50 per cent. It has been reduced to below 39.
- (c) At present European representation is nearly 12 per cent.
- (d) Communal representation in the Bengal Legislature will be Moslem 48'4, Christians 13 (of which Europeans 10, Anglo-Indians 2, Christians 1) and Hindus 38'6. This is not very bad, though it is undoubtedly an injustice to Moslems and they lose both the principal and prestige in Bengal thereby. It should, however, be remembered that in this matter they have against them not only the Hindus but also the Europeans. They have also to consider that the Europeans constitute a casting vote and Moslems by fighting the Hindus and the Europeans will be throwing the Europeans into Hindu arms.

"To sum up, the announcement is quite satisfactory except with reference to Bengal.

"3. Hindus, Congress and Sikhs are violently opposed to the announcement and will do their best to undo it. The announcement can stand or fail as a whole. If any action on the part of the Moslems can be expected to result in altering representation from 48'4 to 51, so can the Sikhs expect to get Moslem representation from nearly 53 per cent reduced to say 48 in the Punjab. The announcement stands or fails as a whole. It does not improve the position of any community in India except of the Moslems ; therefore it is not in the interest of any community to make it effective as it is in the interest of the Moslem Community. In other words does this announcement improve the Moslem position as compared with present, or does it make it worse ? And is there any possibility of the Hindus, or Congress or any other institution giving the Moslems better terms than are contained in this announcement.

An effort should undoubtedly be made to remedy the Bengal constitution. How can this be done ?

- (a) Will the Hindus hold Congress or Congress hold the Hindus? No. We can try and ask the pro-Congress Jamiat-ul-Ulema and Congress Moslems to consider this.
- (b) What are the actual figures? European gets 13 per cent and the remaining is divided between Hindus and Moslems on a population basis. Thus special constituencies are altogether ignored. Therefore, unless European representation is reduced from 13 to 10, it is not possible to secure the Moslem objectives. This action is not practical politics at this stage of the problem.
- (c) Try negotiations with the Europeans. There is little chance of success as His Majesty's Government cannot alter an item relating to Bengal without upsetting the whole thing throughout India.

"There is, however, one way in which efforts can be made. Bengal is to have an Upper House. Now that special interests have been generously provided in the Lower House, there should be no special interests in the Upper House and representation to Moslems should be guaranteed on a population basis and the responsibility of Government to the Legislature should be to both Houses and not one. This presents a fair chance of success.

What is the alternative? The Civil Disobedience movement of Congress? What form can it take in this case? If against Government surely it will not be looked at sympathetically either by Hindus or by Europeans; therefore Moslem action will be strictly isolated, violently opposed by both and both would like Government to cancel the whole arrangements."

It may be noted here that Mahatma Gandhi presented to the Round Table Conference a Communal

formula that had been devised by the Congress Working Committee. The formula had the support of all the Indian Nationalists, Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs and Christians. But it was rejected by the British Cabinet and its supporters in the Conference on the ground that it had not the support of all Indians. "The Communal Award of the Cabinet" had no support anywhere ; not only the Nationalists but even the communalists did not like it. Even the Moslem reactionaries could be won over only after such underhand and shady methods as Sir Fazl-i-Hussain's circular revealed.

This is how the reactionaries desired to solve the communal tangle.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE THIRD CONFERENCE

**A** PART from the irreconcilable attitude of the new British Cabinet towards the Congress, the new reactionary orientation of the British Indian policy was also evident from the attitude of Sir Samuel Hoare and his associate towards the Liberals. In June 1932 the Secretary of State issued a statement completely reversing the Round Table Conference plan and reverting to the Simon Commission methods. He declared that no more meetings of the Round Table Conference were to be held and that those whom the Government desired to invite to represent the Indian view-point would have no other status but that of supplicants before a committee of the Parliament which was finally to decide about India's political advance.

This was too much even for the spineless Liberals. They protested and fulminated at the insult offered to them after the Congress had left the field. Sir Samuel Hoare tried to quibble away the difficulty, but as it was thought necessary to secure the support of the Liberals against the Congress, a sort of compromise had to be arrived at.

Though it seemed that Sir Samuel had to eat humble pie, yet the results of the Third Round Table Conference clearly showed that he had yielded only in appearance. Substantially he was able to do about the same as he had originally proposed. The final proposals about the new constitution were not arrived at by the Conference but by the British ministers over the heads of the Conference delegates. And these proposals were submitted to the Parliamentary Committee who, under Parliamentary conventions, had no power to make any substantial changes in the proposals adumbrated by the Cabinet. The show of arriving at an independent decision after consulting Indian opinion was to be kept up, but it was not difficult to see that the Tory Government had made up its mind to disregard all Indian representations and to stick substantially to the Simon plan.

The Third Round Table Conference was summoned under peculiar circumstances. The idea was to push through the new constitution and make it a *fait accompli* before the Tory Government could be thrown over by progressive forces in England. Indians may or may not like the new constitution, it was to be pushed down their throats even against their wishes. If nothing else, it would create in the country two parties: those who wanted to work the constitution, good, bad or indifferent; and those who did not. The work of fighting those who had still any spirit of freedom left in them was to be

entrusted to those who were to be won over by fat salaries and empty titles.

The first two Conferences may or may not be called Round Table ones ; but this third could in no sense be described as such. In fact in one of his semi-forgetful, or perhaps ungenerously frank, moments, Sir Samal had informed the Liberals that after the Congress had left the Conference it had no right to claim the character of a discussion amongst equal parties. But he soon saw the mistake of his pronouncement. The pose of a Conference could prove useful at least for general publicity. Whatever was to be finally decided was to be done by the Tory Government on its own responsibility, the opinions of the Round Tablers were to have the same weight as those of dancing animals in a circus ring. The sham structure had some propaganda value. Why then sweep it off ? It was due to the realisation of this idea that the same Sir Samual who was so supercilious about the position of the Indian delegates in the beginning of the Conference, became so eloquent about them towards the end. From beggars, as they really were, the Indian delegates to the Third Conference were lifted by him in his closing oration to the heights of the Round Tablers of King Arthur. The sublime and ridiculous were seldom before so intermixed.

In no sense of the word could the Third Conference be called a Round Table Conference ; it was not a Conference of equals. It was round only in

one sense. Like the proverbial Indian oil-mill ass it went round and round without making any advance. It started, though not in name but certainly in spirit, with the Simon Commission proposals and it ended with the same.

Not only was the Congress view not represented, even the representatives of the British Labour Party were excluded. The Labour Party had nominated Professor Lees Smith and Mr. Wedgwood Benn to represent it on the Conference. But as the views of these gentlemen were not palatable to the Tories, they were refused admission ; it was feared that they might create a split in the British delegation. A split in Indian delegation was necessary and was canvassed for, but it could not be tolerated amongst the British delegates. Just as the Congress had to leave the Conference, the Labour Party was likewise forced to do the same.

The personnel of the Third Round Table Conference consisted of all 'SAFE' men. To keep India in the grip of British imperialism and Indian bureaucracy, the nomination of only pliable persons could be allowed. Even the President of the Liberal Federation and the nominees of the Hindu Mahasabha were not invited. It was the Irish tragedy once more. Third rate Cosgraves were bought over; De Valera was ignored. With what results ?

The Congress and the Labour party could not be trusted ; nor could they be deceived by specious words and pleasant equivocation. It was wise to keep them at a safe distance.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE NEW REFORMS

**T**HE net result of the Third Conference was the White Paper embodying the Cabinet's decisions as regards Indian Reforms. All the powers which give a people the status of a free nation were reserved for the Governor General. He was to be appointed by the King and was to be the absolute lord of all what he thought was worth his attention. Finance, Foreign Affairs and Defence were holy departments; Indian Ministers were to be kept at arm's length like so many untouchables; they dare not enter the sacred precincts. Who the booby was to be selected as the chief priest in the official hierarchy, Indians were to have no voice. In recent times in no civilized country any one person was ever endowed with such vast and absolute authority. Perhaps we are wrong; the Czar in Russia and the Sultan in Turkey had powers somewhat similar to those now desired to be vested in the Viceroy of India. But history was jealous of such powers and had its own way with such autocrats.

In a recent speech at Birmingham Mr. Neville Chamberlain said that the British Government had done their best to surround the Reforms with all

"safe-guards which the wit of man could devise." It is only such as are blind to facts, those who would not see what is going on in the world, who could believe that such proposals would check or pacify the advancing tide of Indian Nationalism.

That the Tory politicians were not playing straight was made clear even by their own supporters. When Lord Willingdon just referred in one of his speeches in India to Dominion Status as the goal of Indian advancement, Mr. Churchill wrote :—

"This is merely another example of the Government's duplicity on this question. Repeatedly they have extended airy promises to India, and then explained them away in England. An intricate and double deceit is being practised upon the British and the Indian peoples. When Parliament re-assembles Sir Samuel Hoare will be called upon to explain why the Viceroy should encourage those illusory hopes in India when we have been repeatedly assured that nothing has yet been decided."

That the Reforms were nothing but illusory was patent to everybody who had cared to study them. Sir Thompson, a retired Indian official, who was well-known for his reactionary policy in India and who has now turned a great supporter of the new Reforms, thus argued with men like Churchill who were opposed to any Reform in the Indian constitution :—

"And what is the extent of the responsibility which the White Paper proposes to transfer at the centre ? The diehards will tell you that everything is being handed over, that is their copyright phrase; by a stroke of the pen

the Government will establish full fledged democracy. What do you think of this full-fledged democracy ? The Ministers will have the spending of 20 to 25 per cent. of the Central Revenues. They will not control Defence and foreign affairs which will be under the Governor-General. They will not without the Governor-General's permission be able to touch those thorny subjects of currency and exchange. They will not have the control of payments on account of loans, the pay of the principal services or their pensions, and they will not have the administration of the Railways. They will not be able to amend the constitution and if they menace the interests which are to be specially committed to the Governor-General's charge they will find that he has ample resources of persuasion and of power to protect them. Can you wonder that while the die-hards talk of complete surrender their Congress allies in India should exclaim that the concessions made by the White Paper are not worth having ?"

Much was said in praise of the Provincial Autonomy that the Reforms were supposed to allow. But those with eyes could see that it was all a farce. Under the cloak of protecting the minorities and maintaining law and order, Provincial Governors were endowed with autocratic powers. Just as in the Centre, Moslem politicians played the part of communal reactionaries ; Hindu and Sikh communalists were used for the same role for keeping the Provinces down. Moslem delegates to the Conference could not tolerate responsibility in the Centre because Hindus were in majority there ; the Hindu and Sikh delegates, in retaliation, could not tolerate responsibility in the provinces because in some of them the Moslem were in a majority. All the real power was to remain

in the hands of the bureaucracy. No stage was ever set in a more clumsily clever manner to achieve this object than the third Round Table Conference which resulted in the White Paper Scheme.

The British politicians rejected completely the Indian demand for freedom. Indians wanted to be in their homes what other nations were in theirs. This was denied. The scheme as devised by the Tories dealt with certain political reforms aiming at associating some more Indians with the British in the administration of the country. But political reforms should be judged not as much from the view-point of the inclusion of a few more Indians in the higher grades of Indian services as from the point of view of their benefit to the masses for whose sole welfare an administration of a country should be run. True, there is a school of politicians who judge the reforms from the point of what more power some of the Indians get in the administration of the country. For an Indian nationalist this could not form the criterion to help his judgment; for him it matters little whether it is a Chhattari or a Hailey at the helm of affairs. He would judge an administration not from a personal or a racial point of view, but from the point of view of the good of the masses.

It certainly would tickle our racial vanity if the reins of power in India were in the hands of a Sapru instead of a Willingdon, but that sort of racial prejudice does not form part of a Congressman's mental equipment. It is these invidious racial



distinctions which in the form of aggressive nationalism have so brutalised the European nations. More than three-fourths of the wars of the last two thousand years were due to these racial and national prejudices. None of Gandhi's followers could make these prejudices as the measuring rods for defining the worth of a political measure. For him the main, if not the only, criterion to judge political reforms by was their value in the uplift of the masses.

The proposed reforms miserably failed from this view-point. About three-fourths of the people of votable age were still to remain without a vote. There was an overwhelming demand not only from the Hindus but also from Muslims to enfranchise the whole of the adult population of India. But this almost united demand of the Indian nation was turned down on the flimsy plea of technical or administrative difficulties. To enfranchise the whole of the adult population in India does mean great difficulties. But when it is said that the difficulties are insurmountable, it betrays a sheer lack of the sense of duty. To deprive the dumb millions of their only weapon to improve their lot is a crime of which the penalty is often too great.

The legislatures were to be over-stuffed with the representatives of the Princes, landlords and rich merchants. These classes were to be given weightage far beyond their numbers. The future government of the country was thus to be not of the masses but of certain classes. The spirit of

moral bankruptcy was the motive force that lay behind the reforms. The continuance of the serfdom of the masses was bound to provoke the spread of a class war in India which might prove her further ruin.

The reforms as conceived by the Tory statesmen were also harmful from another point of view. These were to prove more burdensome for the masses than was the case with the system in vogue. The new reforms were calculated to make Indian administration more costly and less efficient than before. The poor peasant who paid the bulk of the Indian taxes was asked to pay much more for the new White Elephant than he could afford. It was admitted that a few more Indians could occupy respectable positions in the future government of the country. It may also be admitted that in certain spheres the government of the country was to be more responsible to Indian opinion than before. But these new gifts were to prove beneficial only to a few persons and a few classes ; the poor man, the man behind the plough and the spindle, had only to pay for such a gift and remain silent.

The proposed system of government could bring no relief to the heavily burdened masses. They were asked to pay more for maintaining departments that had little or no constructive value. Even under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms there was left little money for the nation-building departments - under the new regime the money available for

the good of the people was proportionately to be still less.

It should not be thought that those who condemned the proposed reforms admired the past system. The best part of many an Indian politician's life was spent in fighting against it. But no sensible person could believe in half-hearted changes. These do more injury to the masses than good. The old one man's rule, when you had to pay to one person whereas now you were asked to pay for six for doing the same job, was certainly not so bad as these recurring editions of a hybrid system. There is no half-way house between democracy and autocracy. India must have a democratic government ; in that alone lies her salvation. But if she is unable yet to get it, it should rest satisfied with autocracy both in spirit and form. India can ill-afford to toy with schemes that look democratic in form but are autocratic in spirit. We are asked to pay for the paraphernalia of a spurious kind of democracy without any title to its advantages. Should not then one ask in all seriousness, "Save us from our benefactors"?

The Indian masses could derive very little benefit from the new scheme. As long as India was to serve as a pawn in the Imperial game, Indian administration must remain a costly affair. To dress it into democratic trappings is to make it still more expensive for the half-starving poor. It is only when the Indian masses are enfranchised, it is only when they get power to decide about the

strength and emoluments of the public services, that the Indians can benefit by a democratic form of government. Otherwise all this parade of costly reforms is a cruel joke.

The British politicians tried by these reforms to appease a certain class of political agitators in India. They wanted to buy over this class by offering them new opportunities and new positions. But the new reforms meant no good to the man in the street. These reforms meant nothing to him but the addition of extra weight to the one already hanging round their neck. It can be no satisfaction to him to find that the colour of the new weight was to be black in place of the white.

The value of the reforms could be tested by the following questions: Would Indian masses get more and better food as a result of these reforms? Would they get better shelter to protect them and their children from cold, rain and sun? Will they get adequate medical aid when ill? Not for once, nowhere in these proposals, one could find a reply in the affirmative to these questions. The reply rather was "If you want to flirt with democracy you should pay for it, even with your life-blood."

The new reforms reminded one of the old Indian story of a gentleman who had a waiter to get him from the bazar one seer of milk every night before retirement. The milk cost him only one anna for the seer, (the story relates to the pre-British times). One day the gentleman suspected that the servant mixed water

with the milk and saved something out of the price paid. He asked another servant of his to accompany the old man so that the milk might not be adulterated. The old servant was as frank as dishonest. He told the guard that he used to save one pice every day out of the purchase of milk and put the necessary quantity of water in it to make up for the deficiency. He now wanted to know from the guard whether he would like to share with him half and half of the pice he saved or he had any other proposal to make. The guard was a respectable person. He could not agree to receive only half a pice ; he suggested that both should get one pice each and let the water do the rest.

The gentleman saw that the quality of the milk instead of improving had further deteriorated. He put another guard to watch the doings of the other two. The old eervants were much perturbed but the new guard came to their rescue. He turned down the proposal that three men should share the two pice formerly saved. The milk in future was to cost only one pice ; there was sufficient water on earth to make up for the loss in quantity.

The worried gentleman had to put another man to see that he got good value of the money he paid. The three old servants were now in a real fix ; they saw that now they must divide three pice into four shares, a contingency which certainly was not to their liking. The proposal was also not to the taste of the new guard. He was a man of courage.

He demanded his full share, one pice, and asked the others also to get their full share, each of them one pice, and leave it to him to deal with the master.

The fourth man went to the market all alone and asked the milk-man to give him some cream to be shown to his master as a sample. Having got the cream, he waited outside the master's room. When informed that the master was dozing on the sofa, he went inside and put the piece of cream on the lips of the master who was dreaming of the good quality of the milk which he should now certainly expect.

When the gentleman woke up, he asked for milk. In Northern India people generally take milk before they go to bed. The new guard promptly replied that the master had already had milk before he went dozing. The master got annoyed and threatened that it was all falsehood and a tale. The guard ran out, brought a looking glass, and put it in front of the angry gentleman. His lips were covered with cream. He was wrong; the new guard was really a gem of a man. For once the gentleman got pure milk, all cream and no water.

If you want the legislatures enlarged, if you want more ministers, if you want new courts and new palaces, in short, if you want more Indians to be associated with the British in the administration of the country, you should pay for it. You

should eat less even if already you live on starving rations ; you should clothe less even if you have no more than a loin cloth to cover your naked body ; you should have a smaller house even though now you live in a dingy mud hovel ; and if you are ill you should die unaided and unattended. But you must pay Indians and foreigners who must lord over you for your good.

It would be untrue to say that under the new reforms Indians were given no powers anywhere. They were left lot to do !

The British Empire has proved a failure. As Wells has said in "*Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*," it was sheer good luck that had favoured the British for the last two centuries that gave birth to the Empire and saw it grown to manhood. But the Empire was ill administered. The Americans revolted against it and were free. The Irish went out of it and may at present be even plotting against its very existence. The Egyptians are restive, and the Indians kick every moment against its outermost walls.

The new American nation has made a good use of the lesson from this failure of the British to keep the Empire intact. They have found out that to control a community does not necessarily mean to take responsibility for administering its internal affairs. The Americans now rule almost over the whole of Europe without in any way feeling concerned with the wretched details of

administration. This dirty work is done by the Europeans themselves as hired slaves of the lords in the Wall Street. Whenever these new Imperialists may desire they can build or break any Government in Europe. The Labour Government in London, when it proved inconvenient, was broken by the Wall Street magnates in a week, and the British, the most vain glorious of all European nations, had to kow-tow humbly before Wall Street Lords and present Baldwin and MacDonald, one a conservative of the Conservatives and the other an out-and-out Socialist, as hostages for good behaviour.

This new sort of Imperialism has opened to some extent the eyes of the British. They too now want to govern from outside and leave the fruitless task of governing from within to the victims of Imperialism themselves. But being congenitally dense and habit ridden, the lesson has not yet percolated to any depth below the solid British skull. Under the new reforms the British desire to leave the collection of revenues and other odd jobs to the Indians and keep the power to spend money in their own hands. This is in imitation of the American Imperialism, a very bad imitation though.

The British Imperialists cannot yet leave loose the reins of Finance, Military, and Foreign Affairs from their hands. They feel they would be paralysed if they do so. The old habit is ingrained in their very marrow, and as one addicted to hasheesh



knows that with every draught he is drinking he is drinking death, yet mental weakness allows him not to throw away the cup, they cannot leave from their grasp the departments that are supposed to give them power.

There is no doubt about it that in certain respects the British Imperialists have made good use of the experience they have so far gained in the art of ruling over others. According to the new reforms, much of the dirty work, is to be done by Indians themselves. Indians must levy taxes and collect money themselves to be spent by the British. The British Imperialists should sit at the top even if the victim underneath is crushed out of all civilised existence. How long it is to continue and what are to be the scenes in the final act, is known only to gods. The atmosphere is not propitious.

The British reactionaries have seldom done anything gracefully. As muddle-headed people, they have always muddled in and muddled out. There is a ray of hope in this. Perhaps this time muddle-headedness may be replaced by some clear thinking. The adversity often brings lucid moments even to those who are vanity ridden. The British politicians have now reached almost the brink of bankruptcy. Many a British public man and specially an important group of Labourites have kept their heads cool in this storm. They realise that England has fallen on evil days. They are trying to educate their country on the right lines. One may hope that if such people ever come to power, notwithstanding the pusillanimous

policy of the last Labour Government, there may be found a reasonable way out of the deadlock between Britishers and Indians.

Under the new constitution the Indian portion of the Central Government would be quite weak and the ministers shall have no power to lead the country to national independence. There is enough material in the Reforms to rouse provincial jealousies and the jealousy between the provinces and the Centre. It is true that efforts are made to organise the Moderates, Muslims and Maharajas for opposing the national demand. It is also true that drastic laws have already been enacted to deal with the agitation that an unsatisfactory constitution is bound to provoke. But no body can check the hands of time. No nation can remain long under the domination of another nation.

However one might try otherwise, the Provinces must realise soon that their own autonomy depends upon the freedom of the Central Government from all outside restraints. The Moderates are moderate only because the national movement for freedom demands sacrifices which they cannot make. Their moderatism is only a cloak for self-diffidence and want of guts. Moslems as a community can never be indifferent to the freedom movement. A few amongst them, and for the matter of that from amongst any other community, can be bought at any time and often at any price. But Indian Moslems as a community can never be opposed to self-rule.

Communal fanaticism may now render some of them blind to their best interests ; but this can not go on for ever. The National Movement is growing slowly and steadily amongst Moslems ; a new life is pulsating through the bones that seemed dead.

Many Indian Princes have more grievances against the bureaucracy than has any other Indian community. Their pose of "loyalty" is only skin deep. At present they cannot afford to express their mind. Sir Prabha Shankar Pattani, whose knowledge of the mind of the Princes is unrivalled, recently said that owing to the conditions through which India was passing no Indian could speak out his mind. This statement may or may not apply to all Indians, but it certainly applies to the Indian Princes. The fate of Baroda, Holkar, Alwar, Nabha and Bharatpore has terrorised most of the Princes into abject submission.

The black sheep amongst the Princes have agreed to play as tools in the hands of the opponents of Indian freedom only to save themselves from the threat of exposure of their misdeeds. But the Princes as a class cannot willingly transgress the dictates of conscience as regards their duty to the motherland.

The efforts of those of the reactionary bureaucrats in India and their supporters in England who want to use some of the Indian Princes as an impediment in the way of the establishment of a Free Indian State are bound to fail. When once the Federation comes into being, even those who have

brought the Indian Princes in the constitutional struggle so that the pace of the movement for Indian nationalism be slowed down and checked, will be surprised. When the Indian Princes come to rub shoulders with the Indian Nationalists and when they themselves assume responsibility for running a democratic constitution, their outlook is bound to change.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### SUSPENSION OF CIVIL RESISTANCE

**I**N the early months of 1933, after more than a year had passed since the declaration of Civil Disobedience, the movement reached its lowest ebb. Not the Ordinances, nor any unauthorised repression killed it ; it relapsed into a hybernating condition because of the cyclic changes of time and season. Mass movements, however well organised, however well led, however well based on genuine grievances, cannot go on for ever at the same pitch. Masses like the waves of the sea always move forward, rising and falling.

It was a common cry during the Civil Disobedience Movement that if Indians came forward in sufficient numbers, Swaraj could be had in one year. The psychological effect of such a cry was that whenever the movement tended to go beyond a year, Indian forces generally felt tired. The Congress workers had not generally so arranged their affairs that they could go on with the struggle if it required sacrifices and sufferings in an intensive form for a longer period than what was told to them in the beginning.

There were some other factors of minor importance which also helped to weaken the movement. As has already been explained, the Harijan movement started by Gandhiji in an intensive form as a reply to the Communal "Award" was unexceptionable both as to its origin and as regards its conduct. But, as some times even good things produce bad by-products, it had some deteriorating effect not only on the Civil Disobedience Campaign but also on the Non-co-operation movement in general. Many of the Civil resisters seeing Mahatmaji's life in jeopardy thought it necessary to devote their attention to the Harijan work at the expense of political work. For others it became an easy, though unconscious, excuse to leave the field that required greater sacrifices than the work amongst the Untouchables.

Mahatmaji's efforts to get a law passed removing legal difficulties in opening Hindu temples to the Untouchables, had also a disastrous effect on Non-co-operation mentality. Civil Disobedience and Non-co-operation required boycott of the Councils; but here in the midst of the Campaign, Government aid was sought for a reform which by many was regarded as unimportant and by others as unavailable. Had Mahatmaji been free, he might have met with success all objections raised against this extraordinary step. But he was not free, and no body could justify the new position.

On 8th may 1933 Mahatmaji went on a fast for private reasons. A few days later, he was released by

Government for reasons of health. After his release Mahatmaji suspended Civil Disobedience for three months and called a conference at Poona to chalk out programme for the future. The party that felt tired and wanted the movement to be stopped was very vocal. The vote of the conference was in favour of continuing the movement unless there was some understanding with the Government, but those who were of this view had soon to go to jail or could not publicly defend their position owing to the rule of Ordinances ; the press and the platform were not available to them. The other party, which naturally had Government support as regards facilities for propaganda, distorted the facts and did their best to mislead public opinion.

Mahatmaji and members of the Working Committee present in the Conference had also decided to replace Mass Civil Disobedience by Individual Civil Disobedience. It was believed that, under the new circumstances created by the Ordinance rule, the latter would prove more effective. This required a lot of explaining. But Mahatmaji was soon sent back to prison, and with him those who could defend or explain to the country the new decision. The people were left in confusion. This also had the effect of weakening a movement that was already growing weak.

Still later, in August 1933, Mahatmaji had to come out of the jail because he threatened to fast unto death if he was not given the necessary facilities

for Harijan work; and the Government, instead of giving him the required facilities, released him when it was considered that his life was in danger. Mahatmaji started his fast on the 16th of August and he was released on the 23rd. He now decided that instead of being a party to a cat and mouse game for which the Government seemed to have decided, he should not take any part in the Civil Disobedience Movement until the period of his sentence was over. It was indeed hard for the movement to regain any strength when, though for very valid reasons, the general was unable to lead it.

Mahatmaji was going round the country doing Harijan work, and the Civil Disobedience Movement was dying down slowly and slowly. Mahatmaji could not have felt happy over such a state of affairs. In fact, in his statement of the 14th September, 1933, suspending all political work for himself for one year, he had stated :—

“This self-imposed restraint is a bitter cup. When I said at my trial after the arrest that to remain outside and be a helpless witness of the devastating and demoralising effect of the Ordinance rule was an unbearable agony, I stated the simple unvarnished fact. That agony is no less today than it was on August 4th. But I must bear it.”

Mahatmaji's mental state could be likened to that of a bigamist who loves both his wives with equal devotion. As the leader of the Civil Disobedience movement the country looked to him for guidance and help, but his obligations towards



the Harijan movement debarred him from all active political work. His was indeed a very difficult position, but there seemed no way out of it.

On the other side those who wanted to go to the legislatures were growing more and more vocal. After their defeat in Poona they organised themselves into a party and threatened to pursue their programme even against the wishes of the Congress. They not only pressed for their own programme, they also pressed for the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement. As long as the Civil Disobedience Movement continued, even though nominally, there was no chance for the Congress organisations to function, and as long as the Congress organisations did not function the chances for these people to succeed at the polling booths were meagre. How far all these circumstances influenced Mahatmaji directly or indirectly no body can tell, but all of a sudden on April 7, 1934, he issued the following statement :—

“This statement owes its inspiration to a personal chat with the inmates and associates of the Satyagraha Ashram who had just come out of prison and whom, at Rajendra Babu's instance, I had sent to Behar. More especially is it due to a revealing information I got in the course of a conversation about a valued companion of long standing who was found reluctant to perform the full prison task and preferring his private studies to the allotted task. This was undoubtedly contrary to the rules of Satyagraha. More than the imperfection of the friend, whom I love more than ever, it brought home to me my own imperfection. The friend said he had thought that I was aware of his weakness. I was blind. Blindness

in a leader is unpardonable. I saw at once that I must for the time being remain the sole representative of civil resistance in action.

"During the informal conference week at Poona in July last I had stated that, while many individual civil resisters would be welcome, even one was sufficient to keep alive the message of Satyagraha. Now after much searching of the heart I have arrived at the conclusion that in the present circumstances only one and that myself and no other should for the time being bear the responsibility of civil resistance if it is to succeed as a means of achieving Purna Swaraj."

"I feel that the masses have not received the full message of Satyagraha owing to its adulteration in the process of transmission. It has become clear to me that spiritual instruments suffer in their potency when their use is taught through non-spiritual media. Spiritual messages are self-propagating. The reaction of the masses throughout the Harijan tour has been the latest forcible illustration of what I mean. The splendid response of the masses has been spontaneous. The workers themselves were amazed at the attendance and the fervour of vast masses whom they had never reached.

"Satyagraha is a purely spiritual weapon. It may be used for what appear to be mundane ends and through men and women who do not understand its spirituality, provided the director knows that the weapon is spiritual. Everyone cannot use surgical instruments. Many may use them if there is an expert behind them directing their use. I claim to be a Satyagraha expert in the making. I have need to be far more careful than the expert surgeon who is complete master of his science. I am still a humble searcher. The very nature of the science of Satyagraha precludes the student from seeing more than the step immediately in front of him.

"The introspection prompted by the conversation with the Ashram inmates has led me to the conclusion that I must advise all Congressmen to suspend civil resistance

for Swaraj as distinguished from specific grievances. They should leave it to me alone. It should be resumed by others in my life-time only under my direction, unless one arises claiming to know the science better than I do and inspires confidence. I give this opinion as the author and initiator of Satyagraha. Henceforth, therefore, all who have been impelled to civil resistance for Swaraj under my advice, directly given or indirectly inferred, will desist from civil resistance. I am quite convinced that this is the best course in the interests of India's fight for freedom.

"I am deadly in earnest about this greatest of weapons at the disposal of mankind. It is claimed for Satyagraha that it is a complete substitute for violence or war. It is designed, therefore, to reach the hearts both of the so-called "terrorist" and the rulers who seek to root out the "terrorists" by emasculating the whole nation. But the indifferent civil resistance of many, grand as it has been in its results, has not touched the heart either of the "terrorists" or the rulers as a class. Unadulterated Satyagraha must touch the hearts of both. To test the truth of the proposition, Satyagraha needs to be confined to one qualified person at a time. The trial has never been made. It must be made now.

"Let me caution the reader against mistaking Satyagraha for mere civil resistance. It covers much more than civil resistance. It means relentless search for Truth and the power that such a search gives to the searcher can only be pursued by strictly non-violent means.

"What are the civil resisters thus freed to do? If they are to be ready for the call whenever it comes, they must learn the art and the beauty of self-denial and voluntary poverty. They must engage themselves in nation-building activities, the spread of Khaddar through personal hand-spinning and hand-weaving, the spread of communal unity of hearts by irreproachable personal conduct towards one another in every walk of life, the banishing of untouchability in every shape or form in one's own person, the spread of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks and

drugs by personal contact with individual addicts and generally by cultivating personal purity. These are services which provide maintenance on a poor man's scale. Those for whom the poor man's scale is not feasible should find place in small unorganised industries of national importance which give better wages. Let it be understood that civil resistance is for those who know and perform the duty of voluntary obedience to law and authority.

"It is hardly necessary to say that in issuing this statement I am in no way usurping the function of the Congress. Mine is mere advice to those who look to me for guidance in matters of Satyagraha."

The All India Congress Committee met at Patna, on May 18 and 19, to consider the new position created by this statement. As the people generally felt exhausted and wanted some rest, after a discussion of two days, the Committee passed the following resolutions :—

"Having considered the statement dated April 7, 1934, of Mahatma Gandhi, this Committee accepts his recommendation in regard to the suspension of civil resistance.

"Inasmuch as there exists in the Congress a large body of members who believe in the necessity of entry into the legislatures as a step in the country's progress towards its goal, the All India Congress Committee hereby appoints Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dr. M. A. Ansari to form a Board, with Dr. M. A. Ansari as President called the Congress Parliamentary Board consisting of not more than twenty-five Congressmen.

"The Board shall run and control elections of members to the legislatures on behalf of the Congress and shall have power to raise, possess and administer funds for carrying out its duties.

"The Board shall be subject to the control of the All India Congress Committee and shall have power to frame its constitution and make rules and regulations from time to time for the management of its affairs. The constitution and the rules and regulations shall be placed before the Working committee for approval, but shall be in force pending the approval or otherwise of the Working committee.

"The Board shall select only such Congressmen as candidates who will be pledged to carry out in the legislatures the Congress policy as it will be determined from time to time."

Thus ended the Third Campaign of India's struggle for freedom.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE FUTURE STRUGGLE

**W**E have narrated in the last chapter the different factors that led to the decline of the Civil Disobedience Movement. But as already stated all these incidents were of minor importance. The real cause of the deterioration of the movement was the time factor. Indian masses had not yet learnt to make necessary sacrifices for a long period ; nor was the number of men who came to support the movement sufficiently large to force the Government to come to terms in a short period. It was due to this that though Mahatmaji had advised the suspension of the movement for reasons in which the general public had not much faith, his advice was readily accepted.

We have no desire to act the prophet and say how things would move in the future. But it is certain that political discontent in the country would not go unless the Indians come to their own. The idea that the policy of repression was successful in killing the National Movement or that the introduction of half-hearted reforms would satisfy the agitated minds, is as fallacious in the case of India as it has proved in the case of Ireland. There can be no peace

unless Indians feel as free as people in any other country.

The Indian Nationalists took to Non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience because it was realized that armed revolution was an impossibility and that the so-called constitutional agitation was ineffective. Non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience could, they thought, be effective and were within the reach of every Indian.

The last three waves of the movement have shown that though the peasants and other taxpayers groan under the burden of the taxes they have to pay, they have not yet acquired the strength to resist successfully the repressive measures employed to exact un-bearable dues. It has also become clear that the Indian intelligentsia though resentful of foreign domination, is not prepared to make sacrifice on a large scale involved in the boycott of Government institutions like schools, courts, and services. The use of khadi also did not go far enough to become an effective weapon for acquiring Swaraj. The only item of the programme that could create some impression on the other side was the boycott of the British goods. The Government of India Report for the years 1931-32 referred to the strength of the boycott movement in the following words.—

“ The main cause of the decline was of course the general one that we have already noticed, the lower purchasing power of the Indian consumer. The additional cause, the political boycott, applied particularly

to cotton piecegoods, and although the extent of its influence is difficult to appraise, some indication is afforded by a comparison of the percentage of decline in the case of cotton piece-goods with that in the case of other imports. As compared with the year 1929-30, the last fairly normal year, the total decline in the value of imports of all commodities was 47·5 per cent. The main items in this decline were sugar 61 per cent., machinery 40 per cent., chemicals and drugs 13 per cent. The percentage of decline in the case of cotton manufacture however, was as much as 68 per cent. There can be no doubt that the political boycott was responsible for at any rate a part of the difference of 20 per cent. between the fall in cotton manufactures and that in imported articles as a whole.

“The facts of the boycott are further illustrated by the decline in imports from the United Kingdom, against which the boycott was mainly directed, as compared with other countries. As we have seen, imports of cotton twist and yarn fell from 43·9 million lbs. in 1929-30 to 31·6 lbs. in the year under review, a decline of 27·3 per cent. The fall in the poundage of imports from the United Kingdom was 40 per cent. whereas from other countries including Japan it was only 17 per cent. The drop in yardage of cotton piece-goods as compared with 1929 30 was 60 per cent. This comprised a fall in grey goods of 73 per cent, in white goods of 41 per cent and in coloured goods of 54 per cent. As regards grey goods the fall in imports from the United Kingdom reached the enormous proportion of 88 per cent, in the case of Japan it was 53 per cent. As regards white goods the decline in the case of the United Kingdom was 53 per cent, whereas imports from Japan rose from 14 million yards in 1929-30 to 60 million yards during the year under report. In the case of coloured goods imports from the United Kingdom fell by 61 per cent ; Japanese imports on the other hand fell by 38 per cent ; but as compared with 1930-31 increased by 28 per cent. The significance of these figures is plain.”



For activities connected with the boycott of British goods about a lakh of persons were imprisoned each time the movement was launched. The determined efforts of so many men and women could shake an Irwin or Benn, but men with views like those of Hoare and Willingdon could not be dislodged from their position.

In the immediate future it seems doubtful whether the Indian peasantry or intelligentsia would come forward to shoulder the responsibilities and make the sacrifices that the different items of the non-co-operation programme relating to them demand. It is true that Indians have acquired an ardent desire for freedom, but that desire has not yet found an adequate measure of practical expression.

To prepare in the near future the peasantry and the intelligentsia for all the sacrifices necessarily involved in the non-co-operation programme seems to be a tall order. The only effective and possible weapon left is believed to be a whole-hearted boycott of the British goods, with help here and there from the other items of the programme. The Congress so far could bring in the field about a lakh of men each time it attempted to force the hands of Government. If the struggle is revived again, it is believed that if the civil resisters could quadruple their numbers and carry on the struggle for four years instead of one as they have been hitherto doing, the victory will be theirs. To create that much of

enthusiasm for Swaraj is not an impossibility ; it is not even very difficult. But whether the present Congress leaders are capable of this or not, only time could show. They have a fearless, selfless, honest and earnest leader in Gandhiji. How far they can bring success to his tireless efforts to make India free, lies in their own zeal to follow him.

The Indian patriots believe that their country is at the parting of ways. If India is unable to shake her lethargy and make the best use of the opportunity afforded to her by Mahatmaji's movement, she must remain a subject nation for another twenty or even forty years. When new times come and new generations spring up, they may change the present state of affairs by methods new and unknown. Otherwise the struggle during the last fifteen years has shown that the goal is not very far. It is within sight, only Indians must stretch their hands to the full.

The Indian ideal must remain to oppose evil by goodness and repression by self-suffering. Mahatmaji's new position emphasises this point: still more strongly than ever before. But to some it appears that the spiritual influence of Civil Resistance is subject to the law of diminishing returns. If necessary Gandhiji could offer Satyagraha all alone. It will be a new experiment. If he succeeds it would be quite a miracle. But Gandhiji has already worked many miracles. The new life that he has infused during the last fifteen years in the

dead bones of a nation that has remained in a state of political subjection for hundreds of years, is itself a miracle of no mean order. But miracles are after all miracles ; no nation can depend for its liberty on a miracle. To be practical, Indians shall have, however regretfully, to come down now and then to a little lower level from the ideal that is set before them. They shall have sometimes to adopt measures like those employed by their opponents against them. Civil Resistance shall still be the chief weapon, but it may have to be supplemented by other forms of patriotic endeavour.

Self-suffering will still be the badge of the Indian patriot, but it may in future be used only where its effects would be sure. It shall not be wasted on unresponsive opponents. If Indians are made to suffer, their opponents may not be allowed to go on doing what they pleased so merrily.

It is possible that the civil resistance will be rationalised and made more practical than before. Self-suffering may be expected to produce proportionate results. The lives of men like Lajpat Rai, Moti Lal Nehru, Dass, Sen Gupta and Patel, may not in future be wasted for nothing. The movement will always receive its impulse and momentum from Gandhiji's spiritual ideals, but when once set in motion, it would often run as in the past, its own natural course.

Gandhiji's ideal is an ideal for the whole world. But at present it can be reached only by a few.

A movement run strictly on Mahatmaji's lines, will be a movement of a class. But when the masses take it up, it must find a lower level to run smoothly and effectively. The masses are often tempted to pay their opponents in the latter's own coin. The Indians shall advance higher and higher in the intricacies of Satyagraha ; specially so after the dramatic wholesome checks as are put in their impetuous way from time to time by the author of the movement. But that they could ever reach the ideal, or that the results would solely be measurable according as they are near or at a distance from the ideal, is to believe in the existence of an order of things which does not exist. It is like the search of a Euclidean straight line in an Einsteinian spherical world.

Whatever course the future Indian struggle may take, one thing is quite clear. After the unwarranted display of force by some of the Police and its unjustified defence by the officials who ought to have known better, it is quite impossible for Indians to willingly acquiesce in the present system of Government. Whatever little chance there was of India and England presenting a united front in the future upbuilding of a better world is almost gone for ever. Iron has entered into the souls of Indians, men and women; it is impossible for them to have any special regard for the present order of things. It was Lord Elgin who perhaps in a fit of unsuppressible vanity declared that India was won by the sword and by the sword it must be held. Later on Sir Robert Horne,

■ Conservative candidate for the office of the Secretary of State for India, frankly supported the idea in the words: "I can neither foresee nor contemplate any condition within reasonable view in which we would leave India short of being beaten to our knees and being driven out of it." Mr. Churchill's and Lord Birkenhead's fulminations in this connection are too well known to require quoting. Whatever one may think of the dictum of these worthies, no one could accuse them of hypocrisy that was so characteristic of the difference between words and deeds of men like Reading, Willingdon, Hoare, and Macdonald. But the whole of the brood of gods that want to lord it over Indians either by brutal frankness or by suave diplomacy seem to forget that you can not cow down or deceive a people that are prepared to suffer for their country to the last man and woman. Indians are now out for winning freedom for their country, and no earthly power can keep them down. Suffering has now become the bread of their life. The wheel must turn, and they can patiently wait for the turning over.

It is a blessing that through the ceaseless efforts of Mahatma Gandhi the seeds of non-violence have gone deep into the soil of the Indian mind. Throughout the period stretching beyond a decade, from 1920 onwards, scarcely a hundred men supporting the Government side have been killed by Indians. Of these unfortunate victims only about half-a-dozen

were British ; and most of the men killed on Government side were killed not by Congressmen, nor even by undisciplined mobs but by the members of the revolutionary party who, in their desperation were often as much against the Congress as against the Government. India is bound to become free ; her shackles must be cut through ; but it is now certain, the experience of the last fifteen years makes it quite evident, that it shall be accomplished through non-violent means. In their thoughts and words Indians are certainly bitter ; they have not yet been able to get over that weakness ; the short training and peculiar circumstances are responsible for this defect. But in their actions they have learnt by now to exercise almost complete self-control. Notwithstanding all that the interested detractors may say, non-violence has come to stay ; and it is bound to win through. And this triumph, this victory, will add to the glory of India and to the glory of the whole human race.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### FUNDAMENTALS

**I**NDIAN nationalists think that the salvation of the country lies in their own hands ; and if they could only stick to Mahatma Gandhi's methods success is sure. In all what they do in future, they think, it is absolutely necessary for them to keep in view three fundamental points. These are :—

1. As much emphasis should be laid on Non-violence as on Non-co-operation;
2. The workers should have confidence in themselves ; and
3. They should be prepared for every sacrifice.

Signs are not lacking to show that in their political training of the last few years Indians have largely imbibed the spirit of non-violence, though with a large majority it is still only skin deep. There are men who believe that it is only a subterfuge to hoodwink the opponents, and that ultimately they shall have to use violence for the attainment of Swaraj. It should be the duty of every Satyagrahi or Civil Revolutionary to remove all such ideas from the mind of the masses. The Civil Revolutionaries should do their best to demonstrate that it is not difficult to dislodge the

British in this country from their pedestal of power without using any violence at all; and that in the Indian national struggle, if not from the religious point of view at least from that of expediency, Non-violence is absolutely a necessity.

The Civil Revolutionary need not necessarily put before the masses that violence is immoral, or that by winning the goal through Non-violence Indians will put before the world an object lesson never dreamt before. In the very nature of things, Indians in general cannot afford to pay much attention to such high sounding aims and ideals; but they can be made to understand that circumstanced as they are the policy of Non-violence is the best. Hatred is sure to beget hatred; and the more Indians are violent in words or deeds the greater will be the reaction against the movement and the greater will be the amount of energy required to overcome that opposition. If Indians remain non-violent in their words and acts the resistance from the other side will necessarily be weak. If by their suffering Indians cannot win the sympathy of those against them they can certainly win over those of their countrymen to their side who yet hesitate and stand as neutrals or even work against them.

If Indians could eschew violence from the agitation, the danger from the cycle of hate and contempt which now envelops the rulers and the ruled will be much less. When Indians hate the British in India, they should not forget



that the British belong to a race whose qualities of head and heart are not inferior to those of any one else in the world. It is a misfortune that Indians have to oppose such men whose personal character is in many ways so lovable. If Indians are the victims of British political notions, the British too are the victims of circumstances. There are only a few amongst them who really want to put Indians to any trouble for the sake of trouble alone ; a great majority of them sincerely believe that they are in India for the benefit of this country. No doubt they are labouring under a delusion, but the delusion is as much the result of their own weakness as of the conditions which surround them. Some of the Indians, for their own selfish ends, have made it a trade to deceive the foreigners into the belief that their rule or protection is of great advantage to the country. Much of the tragedy in India is due to this sort of flattering deception ; and deception and ignorance require pity and sympathy to dispel them and not hate.

Indians should also remember that if they use violence of any kind against the foreigner who stands against their righteous demand, they will be easily tempted to use it also against their own countrymen who happen to differ from them in their views about their method of work. This, in the long run, will indirectly strengthen the hands of the opponents of Indian freedom and weaken the strength of their own cause. Self-purification may or may not

influence the bureaucrats, but it is sure to add to Indian strength.

When Indians have set their heart against the foreign domination and made up their mind to become free, it is of no use to abuse the opponents or to criticise their actions. Indians should leave that unprofitable work to the Liberals and others of the same profession. For their misery and misfortunes, for their shame and disgrace, Indians are as much responsible themselves as any one-else. When Indians realise their own weakness, when they are sufficiently strong and manly to do their duty, no one in the world will dare stand in their way or do them any harm.

Those few who take delight in persecuting the Indian nationalists should also remember that all those who are engaged in the national struggle have not yet properly imbibed the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi, and that there is a limit beyond which people in general cannot bear tyranny and high-handedness. Indians are as much made of flesh and blood as anyone else. They too have claws and teeth. Every Satyagrahi will do his best to create a perfectly non-violent atmosphere, but if untoward incidents happen the responsibility shall entirely rest with those who goad the people to violence by their mad and indiscriminate actions. Those who sow the wind should be prepared to reap the whirlwind ; that is what the history of indiscriminate repression in Russia,

France and other countries, where rulers were not very careful in their dealings with the ruled, teaches.

Notwithstanding the remarkable success which the Non-co-operation Movement has achieved, it is to be admitted that Indian people in general have not yet cultivated the spirit of self-confidence to the extent necessary for those who are engaged in an open, though peaceful, rebellion against the old order of things. Not only is it necessary for success that our goal and the path leading to it should be clear to us; it is also necessary that we should have faith in ourselves to reach that goal. On account of repression of centuries Indians as a class have become forgetful of their strength. For such a vast country to remain in a politically helpless condition is indeed pitiable but the weakness is there. Indians should more and more bear in mind that Swaraj is the birth right of every Indian, and that every Indian has the power to attain it; only he needs to have the will to do so.

At the same time, a Civil Revolutionary should not feel vain and proud as did the early Non-co-operators. In the very word "non-co-operation" there seems to be involved a certain sort of moral egotism, a sort of I-touch-you-not tendency. Mahatma Gandhi tried to drive out this mentality by qualifying his non-co-operation with the word non-violent; but as non-violence was

mostly confined to action and not to words and thoughts, political egotism of a certain type automatically attached itself to the minds of Congressmen.

A Civil Revolutionary should work in a spirit of humility. Past experience should teach him that it is not in his interest to look down upon those who are, for one reason or another, not prepared to go hand in hand with him. The best and the only way to acquire Independence is no doubt the way that leads to self-preparation and self-reliance but the Satyagrahis should no more put obstacles in the way of those who want to make use of concessions already secured. A Civil Revolutionary should clearly realise that today he is not strong enough to discard all help from outside his own circle. Whatever little help he can get from any source, he must welcome that. The pride of doing the work alone, the spirit of self-sufficiency should be discarded as well as the spirit of diffidence and helplessness.

No one Indian party is strong enough today to win freedom by its own isolated efforts. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that all should work, not necessarily under one banner, but in the spirit of mutual help and co-operation. At the present stage of progress in the building up of a self-reliant and self-dependent nation, we have as much to depend on our own efforts as on the sympathy of others. Indian nationalists, whether No-changers, Swarajists, Liberals, or Republicans, should understand once

for all that the work of each of them should prove helpful and complementary to the work of the others; they should in no case work in a spirit of antagonism; it means the defeat of the very purpose which is so dear to all of them.

It is natural that the British Imperialists should look to the idea of a Civil Revolution or Independence with anger. To what movement of freedom have the slave-drivers looked with favour anywhere? Even the movement against drink habit was dubbed as seditious. Those who have to work for the freedom of a country should work straight and without any concealment of their design. When they are bound to non-violence, when they make up their mind not to do anything which might in any way prejudice the welfare of humanity, there is no reason why any one should fall foul of them; but if any one does the Civil Revolutionaries need not care. If while working for the national uplift suffering falls to their lot they should gladly welcome it. Thus alone shall India rise to her full stature; thus alone shall her children be considered free human beings like other free people of the world.

It stirs one's soul to see people making sacrifices cheerfully for the sacred cause of freedom. Thousands have gone to jail leaving behind relations and friends. Many become paupers for supporting their country's cause. The rigors of jail life, the inhuman conditions of existence necessarily

prevailing in prisons,wreck the lives of many a promising youth. But all this and more patriots all over the world and in all times bear with heroic fortitude.

When Guru Gobind Singh was scarcely nine years old, he urged his father to willingly lay down his life in defence of the weak and the innocent. At thirty he had to sacrifice his two sons in the battle of Chamkaur. In the thick of the fight when one of the princes was killed, the other one feeling thirsty asked the Guru to get him some water. The father replied, " No water now here ; there on the other side of the grave your martyred brother is waiting for you with a cup of eternally cold water." The prince obeyed, and laid down his life as bravely as his elder brother had done. A little later the Guru heard that his remaining two sons, one seven years old and the other nine,had been buried alive by the Governor of Sirhind, for they had refused to renounce the liberty of conscience. A few years later, the Guru himself died at the hands of an hired assassin. On the death bed, referring to the succession of these tragedies he said :—

" Father, Thy will be done. I have requited the trust that was laid on me."

It is in this spirit that Indians should work and be prepared for suffering and sacrifice.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### HINDU-MOSLEM RELATIONS.

**O**F equal importance with Non-violence and the spirit of self-sacrifice is the question of Hindu-Moslem relations. Each community should understand that whatever loss may fall to its lot by yielding to the unreasonable demands of the other community, that so-called loss cannot be greater than what it has to bear at present on account of foreign domination.

Of the two great causes of inter-communal quarrels political jealousy is more stupid than religious intolerance. It is only a very small number of Indians who are in any way benefited by the crumbs that fall from the tables of the officials ; it is unfortunate that for these few crumbs educated persons of all communities fight like dogs. For selfish ends these men drag behind them their own communities to fight for them for mean and trivial objects. A few posts more or less in some Government department, or a few seats more or a few seats less in some Board or Council, produce but an imperceptible effect on the poverty or prosperity of the community concerned as a whole; but the interested persons so exaggerate the value of these posts and seats that they scruple not to engender bitterness among their

brethren. The old ideas must soon change. Under a responsible Government the officials will neither be paid so extravagantly nor will they enjoy the same powers and privileges as they do now. Only those who find themselves otherwise unsuccessful in life would then care to go in for Government service simply for money; the Government service will not be tempting enough to induce people to quarrel with each other.

Every community should try to understand the true significance of each controversy; they should in no case play into the hands of self-seekers and job-hunters. When this is realised it will not be difficult to exorcise the ghost of communalism from the Indian soil.

Each community should be prepared to make sacrifices for the other, and the one who comes forward to yield first before the others, is sure to secure greater advantage in the long run. The sacrifice of a few posts or seats could result in such a good-will towards it as is sure to counter-balance any loss that it might have to suffer on account of the sacrifices made. Every community should be prepared to make liberal concessions without looking to the attitude of others. If one side perseveres in magnanimity the other is sure to reciprocate. It is a wrong policy to say that we would yield only if others yield; you begin your noble work without any condition, all advantages shall automatically fall to your side in the natural course of things.



The Hindus should understand that it is impossible to drive the seven crores of Muslims out of India. The best way to win their goodwill is to make India such a safe place for the Muslims that they should be prepared to make every sacrifice for her against all enemies from outside. Similarly Moslems should understand that it is impossible for them to coerce the twenty crores of Hindus into meek submission.

Let the Hindus be prepared to make every sacrifice for the Moslems as one makes for a younger brother, and let the Moslems put full confidence in the Hindus as one puts in an elder brother. If both the communities meet each other in this spirit, those who thrive on their disunion shall have little chance to create bad blood between them. It is only the mischievous and the wicked who cry that Swaraj will mean Hindu Raj or Moslem Raj ; the very fact of the cry coming from both the camps shows that there is no truth in it.

During municipal and other elections it often becomes quite clear how falsely the communal cries are raised. The main argument put against the Hindu nationalists by the Hindu communalists is that the nationalists would subordinate the Hindu interests to those of the Mohammadans ; on the other hand Moslem candidates of the nationalist party are opposed by the Moslem communalists on the ground that the Moslem nationalists are mere puppets in the hands of

the Hindus and that the best interests of the community would be endangered by their success. These vile tricks of the anti-nationalists generally fail; but the cry raised against the nationalists of both the communities well illustrates the hollowness of the accusations coming from communal quarters.

It is not the Hindu or the Moslem interests that would be in danger under Swaraj; when we become free only one party will suffer, the party that lives by treachery to its own country; and it is this party which makes so much of communal differences.

As regards religious quarrels, every effort should be made to isolate them as soon as they arise. The foolish behaviour of an individual or even of a section of a community should not be allowed to influence the feelings of the community as a whole. In this respect Indian news-papers should be more careful. It is often through them that exaggerated and one-sided versions are circulated in the country at large and unnecessary embitterment created. The leading members of the community believing to have been wronged should not take upon themselves the duty of condemning the wrong doers, it should be left to the leaders of the other community to do so. This produces better results than aimlessly venting one's spleen in anger.

*Sanghathan* or *Tanzim* may not be bad movements in themselves; but it is difficult to understand how could one save the Hindus from tragedies like those

of Kohat and Malabar, or the Moslems from those of Katarpur or Cawnpore. Neither *Sanghathan* nor *Tanzim* but the creation of love and confidence amongst both the communities or pluck at the critical juncture can avert such tragedies. However strong a community might grow, when its members have to live scattered amongst other communities they can defend themselves only by the goodwill of those amongst whom they live; the supposed strength of their co-religionist living far away cannot be of much use to them. Frontier Hindus can not be helped in a sudden outburst of Pathan passion by the Hindus living in Bombay or Madras, nor the Madras or Bombay Muslims can, in the hour of their trouble, find support from their brethern in the Frontier Province.

The movements which have nothing but jealousy and suspicion at their back cannot go very far in uplifting a community from its position of helplessness. When the motive power of a movement or the ambitions of a community are nothing higher than to outrival a crippled community in its efforts to slave for others, the movement is doomed to fail in ignominy and shame. Had the Hindus or Muslims been sufficiently strong, they would not have felt afraid of each other; they would not have treated each other with suspicion and hatred. The Hindu-Muslim trouble is born of fear and suspicion, which are the product of weakness of both the parties. This weakness can go not by the weak fighting with

the weak, not by the attempts of one slave trying to pull down the other slave, but by uniting their forces in the service of the freedom of their country.

During riots the spirit of Non-violence can prove more helpful to the community attacked than any retaliatory policy or reprisals. If only a few of those attacked were to stand up firmly in a non-violent spirit against the rush of the fanatics, they would more help their brethren than any agility in hurling a stone for stone. In a panic, before the sudden rush of a frenzied mob, such suggestions are nothing more than a counsel of perfection ; but experience shows that it is not seldom that tragedies have been averted by coolness where force and violence would have been of no avail.

In the eyes of God all human beings are equal ; it is only a fool or an atheist who claims to be a knight-errant in the field of religious beliefs. It is in the very nature of things that there should be diversity in unity. All faces are not similar, nor are all the minds. How could all of us have one sort of belief ? In their own place all religions require every respect. Like flowers in a garden all help to manifest the beauty of God's universe. You cannot say that the China rose is more beautiful than the Black Prince, or that the jessamine smells sweeter than the violet; it is your personal taste or associations that make one appear better to you than the other; but in the garden of nature each has its own unrivalled beauty and sweetness.

An Indian nationalist of the seventeenth century who was perhaps the first to conceive the idea of Indian unity, once wrote :—

“Some are Hindus and some Mohammadans, some Rafzis and some Imam Shafis ; but know that they all belong to the same caste—Humanity.

“*Karta* or the Creator of the Hindus and *Karim* or Generous of the Moslems, are one; even by mistake regard them not as different.

“The Hindu temple and the Moslem mosque are the same, the Hindu *Puja*, worship, and the Moslem *Nimaz*, prayer, are the same. All men are equal ; they appear different through error.

“*Devtas*, *Adevs*, *Yakshas*, *Gandharbs*, *Mohammadans*, and *Hindus* have different modes of life on account of the climate of the countries they live in.

“All men have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body, the same build ; all are made of earth, air, fire and water.

“*Allah* and *Abhekh* are the same ; the Purana and the Quran are to the same purport ; they are all alike ; the one Lord created them all.

“As from the fire millions of sparks arise, and rising separately all unite in the fire again ;

“As from the stream millions of waves arise and being composed of water all are called water ;

“So from God's beautiful form life and matter are manifested ; all are born from Him, and all shall unite with Him again.”

These words of Guru Govind Singh are as true to-day as they were three hundred years back when he preached his gospel of love and service. Those who accuse others of idol worship if they knew the idols of their own hearts—the idols of lust, anger, greed,

selfishness and vanity—they would hesitate before throwing stones on others. Those who accuse others of filth and dirt, should better wash their own hearts of impurity and vice than turn their supercilious noses from their brethren.

Those who believe in God are humble ; in their humility they are more after their own purification than after criticism of the beliefs of others. Love of one's religion is a noble thing ; enthusiasm to spread it is laudable ; but the spirit of a religion is spread more by the amount of purity and love its followers possess than by any capacity for criticising others. It is only the ignorant and the short-sighted who glorify their own weaknesses and prejudices into religious zeal. Such persons do more harm to their own community than they know.

Men are like actors in a play. On the stage one sees kings, queens, noblemen, soldiers and others playing different parts; but their life behind the foot lights is only a make-believe. They are dressed like men of noble birth and high pretensions, but in reality they may have no claim to any higher position than what they are paid for to act. People call themselves Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians. But are they true Hindus, true Moslems, true Sikhs, or true Christians. A thief will not steal in the presence of a watchman; but we, who believe, rather who say that we believe, that God is everywhere, often behave more shamefully than a thief. True, every one has a right to ask others to follow his religion, but

before asking others to do so we should also try to know what we ourselves really are. If I myself am not a true Hindu or a true Moslem or a true Sikh, what is the use of my asking others to follow me ? *Shuddhi* and *Tabligh* as advocated by vulgar writers and indecent speakers are nothing more than traps for the unwary ; those who themselves are in the darkness cannot show light to others.

It is unfortunate that great religions based on the principles of universal love and brotherhood should degenerate into narrow communalism. From catholic point of view a Nehru is a greater Moslem than many of those who claim to defend the interests of Islam while in fact by their behaviour and action they do nothing else but try to drag the high reputation of their religion down to the level of a blind dogma. Similarly Maulana Azad is a greater Hindu than many of the Hindus who defame Hinduism by their angry words and hate-inspired conduct.

When fighting for freedom, we should rise above petty quarrels and foolish controversies. When people live together in one place or in one country misunderstandings must arise now and then, but such misunderstandings should not blind us to the realisation of our common goal. It is indeed shameful that local occurrences should so warp the judgment of some of us that we should forget our common duty. Savages have little

control over their passions and they spend much of their time in fighting each other, but when attacked from outside, they forget their personal quarrels and fight shoulder to shoulder against the common foe. Some of us here in India do not possess even the sagacity that the savages display in their daily life. The men of the wilds behave more intelligently than many communalists do. Cannot we rise above such suicidal foolishness ? Swaraj is for the common good of all Indians, whether they be Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis or Christians. When they quarrel among themselves and lose sight of their common goal, they cut at the roots of their own welfare and prosperity.

It is the prime duty of every Indian nationalist to bring about communal unity. But when communal quarrels are made the basis of denial of political freedom, there is nothing but sheer perversity at the back of such a denial. It is said that when the Indian nationalists are able to unite the different Indian communities to a common demand, the foreign Government is bound to yield. Those who make such suggestions forget that the Government cannot allow us to unite, if the sole object of such unity is to force the hands of the Government against its will. It is surprising that knowing all this, notwithstanding such a long experience of unity conferences, some of us still feel enamoured of this theme. All talks about complete unity are fruitless as long as we have people in India whose



interests are best served by disunity amongst the various Indian communities.

We forget that those who are actively fighting for the liberties of their country, whether Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Christians, are in one camp; they are united for all practical purposes and there is no quarrel amongst them. The differences that loom so large in the political horizon are amongst politicians who are after favours from the ruling class and who have absolutely no desire to make any sacrifices for the cause of the country. You cannot bring such people to a common understanding. One feels sure that even if some sort of understanding is arrived at between Hindu and Muslim leaders who now quarrel with each other, a new set of leaders will be brought on to the stage to keep the cauldron seething. Unity amongst self-made Hindu and Muslim leaders is an impossibility specially when under the auspices of interested organisations one party is openly allowed to preach to the people to carve out Muslim India as separate from *Kafir* India and the other party is allowed to talk of a Hindu India, with all the Muslims turned out of the country as *Malechhas*.

No political differences exist amongst the masses; their interests, whether one is a Hindu or a Moslem, are always identical. The Congress is trying to win over the masses to its side. There are more Hindus and Moslems in the Congress to-day than they were before the advent of Gandhi. In recent

years the Frontier Moslems have done more for the Congress than any other community.

What is desired in India at present is not as much the so-called unity amongst hirelings and communally minded people as strength amongst those who are already fighting for the freedom of the country. We have got about a lakh of such men—Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Parsis—who are out to see their country as free as any other civilised country in the world. Only if we could increase that number a little more and increase their stamina to undergo hardships for a little longer period than is the case at present, unity or no unity, the country would be free long before many of us imagine. After centuries of political subjection, during the last five years we have been able to put about a lakh of men in the field, it is not difficult to multiply that number by five and increase five-fold also the staying power of the non-violent soldiers. If we could do that we are sure to win. England would not yield to Indian demands, however unitedly such demands are put forward. England would yield only to demands that are backed by the determination of those who are prepared to sacrifice their all in the cause of their country's freedom.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII

### NEW PARTIES

**J**UST as we find the political atmosphere of the country sometimes fouled by communal controversies, recently some trouble has arisen because of the new parties that have grown up in the country owing to the general political ferment all over the world.

It has been argued, often with some heat, whether the future Government of India should be Fascistic or Communistic, Unitary or Federal, Monarchic or Republican. A discussion of these questions at the present stage has a ring of unreality about it. There is no proper atmosphere present to give such discussions the warmth and life of reality. These questions can properly be settled only when Indians have acquired the effective power to decide them. To-day any discussion on such issues is no better than the ideas of a hungry man who dreams he has a rich feast placed before him and finds it difficult to make a choice.

It is true that the masses are not much interested in these academic questions. But the propagandist is out in the field; the teachings of different schools of thought are permeating the soil. One who

is dealing with the nationalist movement in India cannot ignore these questions, however unimportant these might appear to be from the practical point of view.

Indians are Socialists by nature, Nihilists by religion, and Capitalists in practice. Their religions generally teach them to regard all Governments as false and all officials as instruments of wickedness. The political world and its ways are condemned in unmistakable terms and those who interest themselves in such affairs are regarded as running after will-o'-the-wisp leading to destruction. No doubt there are very few who pay serious attention to such ideas, but all regard these concepts as the great ideals set before them by the prophets and sages of old who are loved and admired by them.

By the force of circumstances, Indians have readily bowed before the wealthy and the strong. It is often regarded as a divine dispensation that the strong should rule and enjoy, while the weak should toil and suffer. Exploitation of the poor by the rich is not considered to be sinful; and the only favour that can be expected from the wealthy and powerful classes is that they may show some pity and patronage to the down-trodden. If those who happened to possess power and pelf were only to be a little lenient in their exactions, the Indian masses would easily recognise them as benefactors of mankind.

Due to their lazy habits, Indians regard the

Government as a sort of a parent. They want it to do everything for them. Individual effort to develop the resources of the country is not much in evidence and the Government is required to do everything as a national business on an extensive scale. Much of it is due to the lack of the spirit of enterprise and the absence of the faculty of co-operation amongst themselves for a common purpose. This may or may not be regarded a weakness, but it has resulted in saving the country from some disastrous consequences. While in other countries Socialism in its various forms has led to class wars of varying intensity, India has been comparatively free from such disturbing elements. The Indian Government is already socialistic in its tendencies; and the individual capitalists as such are not so strong in India as in other countries. Many of the great enterprises like the Post Office, Railways, Salt mines, Water-ways, and Irrigation works are already under the control of the Government; and it will not be very difficult to push the movement for the socialisation of the key industries still further under Swaraj.

But the real question is how far will the rush of Communism affect the Indian conditions. It is true that under Swaraj much of the work of national development will be in charge of the Government; individual efforts will not be sufficient to cope with the great work that has lain neglected for so long a time in the past. But will the Government activities

be strong enough to kill all individual and private efforts? And will it be possible totally to abolish the institution of private property? On first thought the reply appears to be in the negative. For hundreds of generations, the right to possess a thing which one has acquired, rightly or wrongly, by fair means or foul, has been recognised as sacred and inviolable. Religions, when they come down from the high pedestal of spiritual truths to the daily life of the common people, as they have often to do, also inculcate the same principle. Tradition, history, custom also point in the same direction. Under the circumstances if one were to say that the success of Communism in India is not certain, no one should feel surprised at it.

It should also not be forgotten that Capitalists as a class, with almost all the strong Governments at their back, are out to crush Communism or at least check its spread. Methods employed to support these efforts are also not ordinary. The anti-communistic propaganda is carried on a gigantic scale. Honesty and dishonesty, money and violence, cajolery and threats, religious prejudices and innate immoral tendencies, love of idleness and hatred of a life of labour, these and many other plain and garbled truths and untruths are employed to prop up ideas which have ruled the world from the dark past down to the present day. That Communism, under these circumstances, will be able to fight out its way successfully easily or quickly seems indeed difficult.

There is no vice which is not attributed to the Communistic form of Government. Some time back there was a great famine in Russia; it was due purely to weather conditions ; there was no rain for about a year, and crops failed. Scarcity of food grains was inevitable and there was a lot of privation and misery. Instead of helping the unfortunate people who were the prey of a natural calamity, the whole of the European strength was devoted to preach from the press and platform that all the trouble in Russia was due to the prevalence of Communism. No body cared to think that in India famines were a chronic disease.

America at one time went nearly dry. There were few who did not approve of this action. But vested interests which heavily suffered in liquor trade, and for whom the spread of the Prohibition movement to Europe meant the death of their business, raised a hue and cry against the reform. It was not unnatural; but the surprise was that in order to prejudice the minds of the people against Prohibition the bogey of Bolshevism was raised and the people were asked to believe that both Bolshevism and Prohibition go together and were in fact one and the same thing. This shows how interested Capitalists associate Communism with every movement antagonistic to their interests.

Ireland fought for her political independence for about one hundred years. The Irish people were mortal enemies of the English long before the words

Communism and Bolshevism were known to any European language. But all the trouble in Ireland was attributed to the new doctrine. And why? Simply to produce hatred in the mind of the British people against the movement that aimed at the independence of a people who thought that they were deprived of their liberty.

The same is the case in India. In the circumstances it would indeed be a miracle if Communism gets any hold in this country. But the world is as full of natural miracles as the religious books are full of miracles of the unnatural type. No Government was stronger than that of Russia; no aristocracy was more influential or resourceful than that of the country of the Czars; no people were more helpless and docile; but to-day Russians stand out as the most independent and triumphant nation in the world. The teachings espoused by them are spreading like wild fire, in one form or another, as much in the west as in the east. The Swaraj Government of the future is bound to defeat violence from all quarters, but it will be its duty to see that the new doctrines and the new methods of government receive a courteous hearing.

It appears then that in the beginning the Swaraj Government will be, on account of its past traditions, a government of the classes; in its tendencies it will be socialistic; and, on account of the great poverty of the masses, it will progress after a fair trial towards some form of Communism. This is



what the spirit of the times indicates, though outward signs do not appear to be so well pronounced as yet.

Allied to this discussion is the question : Will the Swaraj Government be a monarchy like that of the United Kingdom, or will it be a Republic as is the case in the United States of America ? Monarchic, in the ancient sense of the word, the future Government of India cannot be ; the system is gone for ever from all civilized countries, and India should not be regarded as an exception. So when anybody talks of the establishment of a monarchy in India it is only in the sense of a limited monarchy.

Now and then a proposal is made by some Indian Princes or by some Englishmen, deriving their inspiration from the same source, of establishing an Indian monarchy separate from that of the British Isles. They suggest that a member of the English Royal Family be made the Emperor of India and this Prince should furnish a separate dynasty of rulers for this country. What should be the relationship of India and England after such a consummation has not been defined, and we need not bother ourselves much about it. The proposal, no doubt appealing to the imagination fed on pomp and show, is practically out of court. It is only some of the interested Princes, desiring to keep their berths safe by this system, who venture to make such suggestions ; otherwise the Indian people and, so for as one can see, the British people as well, are not prepared to pay any attention to the idea at all,

The question is also sometimes put whether the future Government of India is to be Unitary or Federal. It is more or less an academic question. Even the arrant Federalist admits that Foreign relations, Defence, Customs and Tariffs, and Currency are to remain under the control of the Central Government; the Provinces in this respect would be entirely under the authority of the Indian Legislatures and the Central Executive. When the Provinces do not possess these powers, to call their co-operation as established on a strictly Federal basis would be a misnomer. Similarly it is quite impossible in India to vest the Central Government with powers that the British Parliament enjoys in the case of Scotland, England and Wales: the country is too big for that. Hence the future Government of India would neither be Federal nor Unitary in the orthodox sense of the terms; it would be midway between the two.

The question assumed importance only recently. Some of the Muslim communalists who want to divide India into communal provinces are at the back of it. The Indian Princes, who are on the other hand, mostly Hindus, are also anxious to keep their unbridled privileges to rule or misrule their subjects intact, and hence they too clamour to deprive the Central Government of its present powers of control and guidance. The third party to support the idea is composed of those British statesman who want

to divide India into so many water-tight provincial administrations, so that it might be easy for the British Imperialists to coerce the national opinion in India into weak if not abject submission. Sir John Simon, whose Commission received such a cold shoulder from national India, is said to have once remarked that the Indian Legislative Assembly was a menace to the British Empire ; its power must be broken. This he said when the Assembly was only partially national in its composition, and when it had little or no power over the Executive. For such British statesmen it is tragic to contemplate the establishment of a strong and powerful national Government in India. Hence the suggestion to divide India into so many autonomous states with a weak and helpless central organisation to keep them nominally linked with each other.

But the spirit of the times is against all such schemes. The daily growing number of modern inventions, specially in the domain of transport, are annihilating space and time. The whole world is coming nearer and nearer day by day ; the partitions that divided countries and nations have grown quite thin. With such a spirit abroad, to try to divide India into separate exclusive groups is to try to fight against the time spirit ; the attempt is doomed to fail. The Provinces would be free to develop their own resources and help in the advancement of the people under their charge ; but all the same the Central Government would be as strong as

any other Government in the world ; no fissiparous tendencies will be allowed to weaken its strength and make the country again a prey to the machinations of unscrupulous exploiters.

Certain foreign writers and politicians, for motives well understood, have laid great stress on the theory that India is peopled by so many different races and is the home of so many different religions that an Indian nation as such does not really exist ; and that if any idea of it is found anywhere it is only of recent growth. India due to her extensive area gives shelter to many races and religions ; even the standards of civilisation are different in various parts ; but it is foolish, if not mischievous, to deny the existence of the national spirit among Indians. England might have contributed to Indian progress in many a sphere but in this particular aspect India need not bow her head of gratitude to any foreign influence. In the hoary past, in ages when the Vedas assumed their present form, India was regarded as one single unit by her people. From Kandhar to the Easternmost frontiers of Assam, from the Deccan to the feet of the Himalayas, the whole country was called by one name—*Bharat Varsha* ; people regarded themselves as belonging to one nation and called themselves Aryans. The *Chakarvarti* Princes aspired, and often succeeded, in bringing the entire country under their undisputed sway. Later on in the days of the Afghans and Moguls, the whole country was called Hindustan ; her people were

known as Hindus; often the great Emperors ruled over almost the whole of the country now known as India. So the idea of an Indian nation or of an Indian country is by no means a new-fangled notion of political idealists or a blessing imported from the west.

As soon as the British leave this country disintegration would set in, is an idea that may flatter the vanity of the ruling class but is not true. Provincial prejudices had not played any significant part in the past and no danger should be expected from that source in the future. Provincial autonomy and control from the centre, were easily understood in the days of the Mauryan and Mogul Emperors; Chandra Gupta and Akbar both knew how much to leave to the provincial viceroys and how much to keep in the hands of their ministers in Patliputra and Agra. Indian statesmen of the future can do much better under circumstances more favourable than was the case in the old times. If nothing else, the facility of communications alone has given us an immense advantage over our forefathers.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV TO THE BRITISH

**I**T is in the best interests of the ruling class that they should not interfere with the peaceful activities of the Indian nationalists. It brings no credit to the present governing class that it should find it necessary to send thousands of the best men in the country to prison. A system of government which finds it necessary for its maintenance to imprison men like Gandhi, Moti Lal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Jawahar Lal Nehru, the Patel brothers, Abul Kalam Azad and Ansari must stand self-condemned in the eyes of all impartial observers. Strong and repressive action to suppress popular movements not only defeats its own object, it also creates strong reaction in the minds of the people and alienates the sympathy of its own supporters. Nothing did more to create a revulsion of feeling against the bureaucracy in the country than the stray *lathi* charges on women and children and non-violent crowds. It is now generally accepted that it is often the violent methods employed by some of the officials to suppress legitimate agitation or peaceful expression of popular discontent, that goad sensitive young men to the use of violence. As Lord Morley put it, it was the reactionary and strong

action of the British bureaucrats that was responsible for the emergence of the cult of the bomb in India. And it is for this reason that public opinion in India, in spite of its hatred of all violence and crime and its belief in the principle of non-violence, has not yet been able to make an end of terrorism.

It is doubtful if the bureaucracy in India was ever before so irresponsible to the public feelings and sentiments as during the last fifteen years or so. What it wanted was that people should meekly submit to all its *ipse dixits*: that alone in its opinion was the criterion from which it could judge Indian fitness for acquiring more favours from the benign over-lords. If the bureaucracy wanted to squander money on imported civilians or military men, Indians should say yes ; if it was desired to mould the country's Commercial, Industrial or Currency policy in a manner which Indian economists and publicists regards as injurious to India, Indians should say still ditto ; and if the Government wanted to lock up certain inconvenient persons without giving them any chance to plead their innocence, Indians should say, amen. If they could not do so, they were unfit for Swaraj.

The time has come for the British to know that Indians cannot be cajoled with illusory concessions. Indians want to establish Swaraj, or their own Government in the country, with the help of the British if that be forthcoming

and without that help, if it is denied. If the proof demanded from Indians of their capacity for Swaraj is that they should submit meekly to every encroachment on their rights, they do not want that sort of Swaraj. They want the genuine article and not the spurious one with the brand of foreign domination stamped on it.

Indian newspapers daily relate stories referring to Indian poverty and other wretched conditions of the people. One story that recently attracted much attention was that of one Mannu of Burdwan, who had to pawn his wife for three rupees because he was dying of hunger. He was brought before the magistrate and heavily sentenced for attacking the money-lender who wanted his three rupees back without caring to return the wife.

If one visits Indian prisons one would meet many a man who took to a life of crime because of poverty. When in prison one Muslim skilled brazier of Delhi told the writer that he had been out of employment for about six months before he was put in jail. When the brazier had pawned or sold every thing in the house, he was obliged to go to the market and search for employment as a common labourer. There too he could get no work regularly. Once he was without any work for seven days at a stretch. He would daily go out in the morning with a basket in his hand to seek work, and would come back in the evening without a single pie in his pocket. His hungry



children—he had two little daughters and one boy of seven—would wait for him at the door till late in the evening and on his return ask for food. He could give them only leaves of trees to eat. The kiddies not being satisfied would cry with hunger. When he could no more bear this torture he became desperate and broke up a grocer's shop at night to get some food. He was arrested and sent to prison. His children were taken away by the Christian missionaries. His young wife fell in the hands of evil persons and adopted the life of a public woman. But this new life of dishonour was too much for her; she was found one morning hanging by a rope in her room. The prisoner had nothing left but tears.

Such cases are not rare. Cases of suicide come before the Indian courts almost every week. In most cases, the motive for self-annihilation is hunger. Millions of Indians go every night to bed without any food. If some of them felt tired of such a life and tried to end it, no one should feel surprised.

The Britishers are not consciously responsible for such a state of misery and starvation. If they could prevent it, they would certainly try to do so. But a Government dominated by foreign interests is unfit to remedy such evils; it is only under Swaraj that there can be a radical improvement in the economic condition of the people.

In 1857, at the time of the Sepoy rising, Indian

were socially, morally, and economically, far better off than the Japanese. But after the dawn of Meiji Era in Japan, after the dawn of responsible government in that country, within a few decades Japan became one of the most prosperous countries in the world. It stands now amongst the foremost of the great nations of the world.

All other countries that enjoy self-government have gone up in the scale of progress. It is true that in India the Government has tried to bring about many improvements, but relative to the other progressive countries, every hour India is left behind more and more in the race for progress. However best our friends tried to improve Indian conditions, it was impossible for them to do full justice to the task. A nation can rise to the full height of its stature only by its own efforts.

Indians base their demand for political Independence on the one fundamental ground that the government of a country by foreigners or dominated by foreign interests is the greatest of all modern evils, and the darkest of all the dark wrongs. There can be no peace, no contentment, no prosperity, no progress in the country unless the incubus of alien domination is removed from its face for ever.

A few hours before I commenced writing these lines, an old lady came tottering into my room. She told me that her son was deported to the Andamans for some political offence, in 1915. She and her daughter-in-law, the wife of the prisoner, went to

see him off the Railway station on the day when the lifer's train was to leave Panjab for the "Black waters." The Police would not allow her and her daughter-in-law to come near the train. When the train started both the women ran after it to catch a glimpse of the man. They ran, and ran, but could not catch the train. Both fell down senseless on the ground. Since that day the old woman wanders about all over the country asking for the news of her son. No body is of any help to her; the boy was dead long ago. What could be the end of such suffering?

The sooner the right of Indians to responsible government is recognised, the better for all concerned. The Indian nationalist is out to win Swaraj; no force on earth can check him from that path. It is in the interests of the Britishers themselves to concede the national demand. Gandhi is the greatest policeman which the British Empire has ever had. In 1857 Indians fought for political freedom for scarcely a year. Thousands of Englishmen and their allies were killed in that struggle. The Indians under Gandhi are now in the field for the last fifteen years. During this period, even at the most exaggerated estimate, not more than a dozen Englishmen have been killed by the Indians. Is not this record in itself a sufficient appeal to the British to treat the national demand with respect. If Gandhi's non-violent struggle fails, the terrorist and the martial law automatically step

in. Such a twist in the national movement is neither in the interest of Indians nor in that of the British. It is in the hands of the British to save India from the fate of Ireland. By saving India from the fate of Ireland, the British will also save themselves from the fate which they had to experience in Ireland.

The fears expressed here about India becoming another Ireland are not imaginary. It has always been seen that whenever the Civil Resistance movement has declined the terrorist movement has come up into prominence. In the year 1933 the Civil Disobedience movement was at a very low ebb. On the contrary the terrorist movement in Bengal reached in that year the level it had seldom done before. The Government of Bengal had to admit this fact in its resolution on the Jails Administration Report for the year 1933, in the following words :—

“The number of terrorist convicts, which at the beginning of the year was 225, stood at its close at 438 and this after 88 were removed to the Andamans. The total number of such convicts admitted to prisons during the year was no less than 741, an unwelcome reminder of the grip that terrorism has gained on the youth of the country.”

Here is another news paragraph from a recent issue of the *Times of India*, June 17, 1934.

“ Mr. Stevens (The District Magistrate of Midnapur, the centre of the Terrorist movement in Bengal) was escorted by the C. I. D. in plain clothes a thousand miles to Bombay and handed over to an officer of the Special Branch, Bombay Police. This latter was within a few

feet of him till the ship's final siren ordered 'Friends ashore.'

" 'How do you find Midnapore now ? Have the people, sobered down ? Has terrorism shown signs of subsiding ?' inquired the *Times* reporter.

" 'No, not a bit. It is the same as before' replied Mr. Stevens."

Gandhi wants peace ; he wants India and England to act as friends in removing violence from the face of India, if not from the face of the whole earth.

Will the Britishers reciprocate ?





